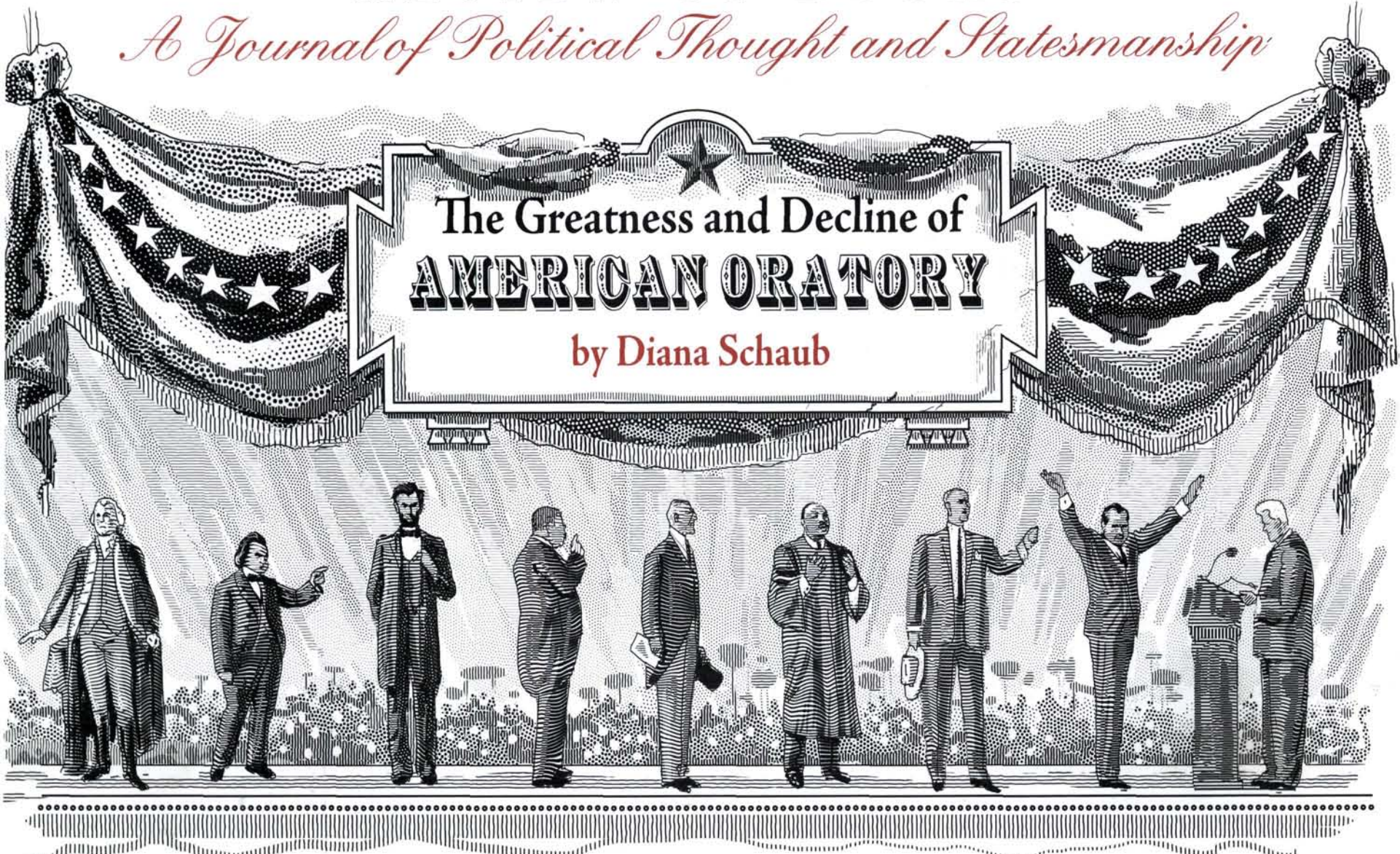


VOLUME VII, NUMBER 3, SUMMER 2007

CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship



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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

MAKING AMERICANS

by Brian T. Kennedy

CONGRESS'S COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM BILL demonstrates, once again, the distance between ordinary Americans and the country's elites.

Let us for a moment not worry about the health of the economy or the justice of kicking out the millions of illegal aliens we have let in with a wink and a nod. There will be plenty of time for those concerns in the months ahead. Instead, let us recognize the crisis of American citizenship itself, accelerated by 40 years of unchecked illegal immigration and deeply flawed attempts at immigration reform.

America's founders understood that self-government requires certain good habits, and that we as a sovereign people must determine who can be an American based first and foremost on the character of the person in question. They were concerned that immigrants might come in such numbers that they would overwhelm the existing political community, remaking it in the image of the very countries the newcomers had chosen to flee. But our founders also knew that if immigrants came in manageable numbers, they would be welcomed not as a separate class of laborers and outsiders, but as fellow Americans.

This view was never better expressed than by Abraham Lincoln in 1858, reflecting on the meaning of the 4th of July:

We hold this annual celebration to remind ourselves of all the good done in this process of time, of how it was done and who did it, and how we are historically connected with it.... We have besides these men—descended by blood from our ancestors—among us perhaps half our people who are not descendants at all of these men.... If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they have none, they cannot carry themselves back into that glorious epoch and make themselves feel that they are part of us, but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are.

The Claremont Institute exists to uphold the truth of this view. Its work is essential because America's first principles have been abandoned by the Left and inadequately defended, misunderstood, or even attacked by the Right. And it is these first principles, as Lincoln knew—and not race or religion or real estate—that bind us as a nation. It is precisely because our political class is not firmly grounded in these principles that the immigration debate takes on such urgency.

OUR SOUTHERN BORDER IS VIRTUALLY UNPROTECTED. SOME 12 to 20 million illegal aliens—nobody knows the real number—reside in the United States, with thousands more arriving every day. The sheer size and concentration of the illegal population, and its constant replenishment, greatly reduce any incentive to assimilate. Many opponents of the recent bill have focused on illegal immigration's devastating impact on our crime rates and social welfare system. And these statistics are vital to consider. But this is not the heart of the problem.

Our public schools—once citadels that unabashedly perpetuated the American character—are now dens of multiculturalism hostile to the very idea of an American creed. Ordinary citizens may still carry around the country's first principles in their hearts, but the minds of our elites have been corrupted and enfeebled by political correctness.

It is our common belief in the self-evident truths of the Declaration—the laws of nature and of nature's God—that makes us one people. Because these truths no longer guide our civic institutions, turning workers already here into true citizens is today an enormous task. What, then, of the tens of millions more who will come in over the next two decades through temporary work permits and politically inevitable family reunification?

We must hope that America is equal to the challenge. And we will continue to do our part to fight, as Lincoln did, for the principles on which America is founded. But let us realize that the stranglehold of multiculturalism on our elites and the mere fact that we are debating whether to defend our southern border does not bode well for the American experiment in liberty.

There are many short-term actions to be taken on the immigration front, some more important than others. But our ultimate goal is to make sure that Americans, both those here and those we choose to admit in the future, will still be blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of those men who signed that Declaration. If we cannot get this right, the rest won't matter.

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CORRESPONDENCE

READING LEO STRAUSS

In his review of recent books on Leo Strauss ("A Guide for the Perplexed," Spring 2007), Steven Lenzner treats especially harshly *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, by Catherine and Michael Zuckert. In their concern to refute charges that Strauss was an enemy of liberal democracy and even a proponent of tyranny, Lenzner complains, the Zuckerts badly overcompensate, and the result of their efforts is "a Strauss who is formulaic, doctrinaire, and, worst of all, uninteresting." The reader who looks to the *Claremont Review of Books* for guidance as to what to read must come away with the impression that *The Truth About Leo Strauss* is not worth his time—that it reduces Strauss to the status of a good-natured partisan ideologue, scarcely less shallow than the tyrannous schemer contrived by his enemies. The review does a serious injustice to the Zuckerts' excellent book and a disservice to the CRB's readers.

The assertion that the Zuckerts' Strauss is formulaic and doctrinaire refers primarily to their attribution to Strauss of three basic propositions: (1) "America is

modern"; (2) "Modernity is bad"; (3) "America is good." Taken at face value, formulaic and doctrinaire indeed. But the authors make immediately clear that these propositions are not to be taken at face value. They are merely provisional, formulated "in as stark a way as we can"—an amusingly provocative way—to introduce the complexity and seemingly paradoxical character of Strauss's political philosophy, in particular as it reflects on the country he adopted. At various points in his review, Lenzner seems concerned to suggest that the sharp disjunction between classical and modern political philosophy in Strauss's thought is illusory, so that modernity as Strauss viewed it was not all "bad," or destructive of philosophy and of sensible politics, after all. This point is similar to one the Zuckerts make in explaining Strauss's "restrained but genuine" endorsement of America's goodness. But their refinements of the provisional formulations go unacknowledged in Lenzner's review. And at a deeper and more general level, the charge that they render a formulaic and doctrinaire Strauss—a Strauss "far from being a disinterested lover of truth"—is contradicted by the Zuckerts' pervasive insistence on Strauss's Socratic view of the activity of philosophizing, characterized above all by the philosopher's knowledge only of his ignorance of the answers to the deepest human questions. This pervasive insistence on Strauss-as-Socratic goes unmentioned, too, in Lenzner's review.

The heart of the problem with the Zuckerts' book, as Lenzner sees it, concerns the weaknesses in their argument concerning how to read Strauss. The Zuckerts deny that Strauss wrote as he read. They contend that by disclosing the secret of esoteric writing, Strauss foreclosed the option for himself of writing esoterically. Decisive evidence against that claim, according

to Lenzner, appears in Strauss's attention to Maimonides's Introduction to *Guide for the Perplexed*, where Maimonides openly discloses his own practice of esoteric writing. But whatever the truth with respect to Strauss's mode of writing, a fair-minded review would at least have made mention of the chapter endnote in which the Zuckerts address the difficulty presented by this text and sketch several grounds for differentiating Strauss from Maimonides on this issue. Instead, beginning from the premise that the Zuckerts' Strauss "tells the truth—and nothing but the truth," Lenzner claims that the Zuckerts' book "asserts" that "attending with care to Strauss's literary art is...a barren exercise in self-confirmation." In fact they assert no such thing. The premise that Strauss tells the truth and nothing but the truth, if that is indeed the Zuckerts' premise, does not entail an inattention to Strauss's literary art. The key to Strauss's literary and pedagogical art, in the Zuckerts' reading, lies in the fact that Strauss declines to tell the whole truth. This is certainly a different sort of art from that which Lenzner finds in Strauss's speech, but it is not artlessness and in no way justifies his polemical imputation.

Closely related to Lenzner's objection to the Zuckerts' argument on reading Strauss is his contention that they "obscure what Strauss taught concerning the necessary tension between philosophy and society." But this is not the effect of their argument for the justice of the Socratic-Straussian philosopher, which leaves perfectly visible the dangers to political society yet posed by the aporetic character of this sort of philosophic activity. Nor is it the necessary implication of their argument that Strauss's truth-telling, with respect to esoteric writing and especially with respect to the tension between reason and revelation, stands as a public good in the exceptional circum-

stances of our time, when some of the greatest philosophic minds have concluded that philosophy is no longer possible. This argument concerning the present philosophic prudence of publicly emphasizing what had been formerly regarded as dangerous truths to be communicated only esoterically represents perhaps the most original and provocative of the Zuckerts' arguments. Whatever its ultimate soundness as a reading of Strauss or as an argument on its own, this is surely a subtle and ingenious suggestion, and it is indicative of the virtues of the Zuckerts' book, which manages to be at once publicly salutary and philosophically challenging. One would think that in the CRB above all, *The Truth About Leo Strauss* would have received a more respectful hearing.

Peter C. Myers

University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI

In the Introduction to *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, Catherine and Michael Zuckert lay out the purpose of their book—to give accounts of the relation between Strauss's philosophic recovery of the ancients and his qualified political endorsement of modern liberal democracy, of the contributions and differences among his students on the question of American liberal democracy, and finally of the causes of his unexpected recent public prominence. Along the way and "simplifying a great deal," they hope to provide a broad "introduction to his thought, especially as it bears on the character of American democracy." Given these goals, one would expect an assessment of the worth of their book to turn, initially at least, on the question of whether they are fulfilled; one would hope a reviewer, especially one as steeped in Strauss's thought as Steven Lenzner, would first attempt to understand the authors

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as they understand themselves. Unfortunately, he does not.

The Zuckerts write their book partly out of filial duty—to defend a man whom they deeply respect. Yet they also write because they are puzzled—by the sudden media buzz surrounding Strauss, by the way in which Strauss's students variously reconcile three apparently conflicting views they find in Strauss (that America is modern, modernity is bad, and America is good), and by the possibility that Strauss at once practiced esotericism and revealed it as no one in the history of philosophy ever had. Because Strauss seems so unsuitable as a shadow on the cave wall, it is of considerable interest both politically and philosophically to trace the process by which he got there. Lenzner dismisses this line of the Zuckerts' thought too quickly. He focuses instead on their admittedly provocative claim that Strauss did not practice esotericism. But he reads them too coarsely, for he concludes that their Strauss "tells the truth and nothing but the truth." Their view is considerably more complicated. They describe Strauss as practicing "pedagogical reserve," itself an art of writing that involves not so much saying what one does not think true as saying only incompletely what one thinks to be true. In the end, something may be lost by this term. If the tension between philosophy and politics is a version of the ineradicable tension between being and appearing, one might better (with Seth Benardete) call the necessary indirectness of the most serious writing "metaphysical esotericism," thereby preserving its link with the political. Still, something is also gained, for with "pedagogical reserve" the Zuckerts call attention to a crucial issue—that there is a mode of withholding one's thought in its completeness that is perhaps not best understood in terms of persecution.

Steven Lenzner faults the Zuckerts for making Strauss seem formulaic, doctrinaire, and uninteresting. Ironically, this might more accurately be said of his treatment of them. The readers of the CRB deserve better. *The Truth about Leo*

Strauss is an extremely thoughtful book motivated throughout by serious questions.

Michael Davis
Sarah Lawrence College
Bronxville, NY

Anyone cognizant of the intelligence, diligence, scholarly precision and rectitude of Catherine and Michael Zuckert will suspect, and rightly, that the recent review of their volume on Leo Strauss emanates from a twisted judgment. Their book is valuable not only in decisively laying to rest the misinformed criticisms of Strauss that circulate so widely these days but also in supplying an introductory and connected account of Strauss's thought. While it may be of the nature of the subject of esoteric writing that it remain controversial, nothing justifies arbitrary dismissal of a reasoned presentation of the matter as is that of the Zuckerts.

Joseph Cropsey
The University of Chicago
Chicago, IL

Leo Strauss has been deeply implicated in the neoconservative culture of deceit and duplicity, which has led to a needless war and the senseless death and suffering of innocent Americans and Iraqis. Surely, Strauss cannot be blamed for all the follies of the Bush Administration. So it is good to see a few Straussians who are brave enough to come to his defence.

In *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, Catherine and Michael Zuckert make a valiant effort to respond to the critics of Strauss—especially those who think (as I do) that Strauss was a Nietzschean in drag. I regret that the Zuckerts had no access to the updated edition of my book, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (2005), because their claims about the links I make between Strauss and the Bush Administration are purely speculative. Even though I do not share their general portrait of Strauss, I think that they make

some valid points. They argue that Strauss did not endorse imperialism, and would not have endorsed the Bush Administration's rampant imperialism. They display an admirable veracity when they declare that Strauss is a conservative, and a critic of liberal democracy.

In contrast to the frank and forthright approach of the Zuckerts, Steven Smith's effort to rescue Strauss from the "hostile takeover" of the neoconservatives in the Bush Administration is circuitous and deliberately deceptive. In *Reading Leo Strauss*, Smith tells us that Strauss was an esoteric writer who communicated by winks, and was so deliberately coy that he refused to walk through an open door when he could enter through a keyhole. Nevertheless, Smith confidently declares that Strauss was not a conservative of any kind (neo- or otherwise), but a "friend of liberal democracy—one of the best friends democracy has ever had." But much later in the book, we discover that being a friend of liberal democracy is not the same as being a liberal democrat. Smith makes an effort to cover up the contradiction by claiming that a friend is not a flatterer, and that Strauss aimed to rescue liberal democracy from its shortcomings by administering a "counterpoison." However, as I observed in my own review of Smith's book, the "counterpoison" turns out to be lethal to liberal democracy.

When Smith responded to my review, he completely repudiated the thesis of his book. He denied that Strauss wrote esoterically, and he compared the relation between Strauss and the neoconservatives to the relation between Nietzsche and the Nazis. That is certainly closer to the truth. I would add that since not all Nietzscheans are Nazis, so, not all Straussians are neoconservatives. Nevertheless, as with Nietzsche, there is a great deal in Strauss's philosophy that invites vulgarization. For example, Smith's appetite for deception is a product of Strauss's penchant for secrecy and his glorification of lying as a noble activity for the elite. In the final analysis, Smith's effort to defend Strauss backfires. It leaves

the impression that the Straussians in the Bush Administration could not possibly have been immune to a vice that is so widespread among the Straussians in the academy.

Both Steven Lenzner and Svetozar Minkov ("Philosophy and Revelation," Spring 2007) are examples of the plebeian depths into which Straussian scholarship has descended. The more obscure and contradictory a book is, the more they praise it. They are repelled by the clarity of the Zuckerts, beguiled by the esotericism of Smith, delighted by the contradictions of Heinrich Meier, and tantalized by the prospect of navigating the "beautiful labyrinths that are Strauss's writings." Despite being a severe critic of Strauss, I do not think that such a serious man deserves a herd of obscenely frivolous "scholars" as his legacy.

Shadia B. Drury
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada

Steven J. Lenzner replies:

It is striking that not a single one of Catherine and Michael Zuckerts' defenders engage directly my chief criticism of their book, namely, that their emphatic insistence that Strauss did not write as he read is without merit. Only Professor Myers mentions it, but he chooses not to pursue the matter, preferring to focus instead on my alleged neglect of a footnote, an aside, and the like. Almost as revealing is the fact that Professor Cropsey and Professor Davis both explicitly refrain from endorsing the Zuckerts' characterization of Strauss's art of writing, and even Myers's endorsement is ambiguous. What's more, not a single criticism of my reading of Strauss is offered. Might my critics, then, agree with me on the central question being disputed?

Nor do any of the Zuckerts' defenders try to explain—to say nothing of attempting to defend—the Zuckerts' serious lapses from the minimal demands of

academic precision. I gave only a few examples of such lapses: offering an interpretation on the basis of a doctored quotation; attributing to Strauss, without evidence, an absurd statement that he was supposed to invoke frequently ("as an émigré, [Strauss] often stated, he was not really qualified to comment on American politics"); attributing a conclusion to Strauss's *Philosophy and Law* diametrically opposed to the one the book itself sets forth at considerable length. And so on.

Davis criticizes me for failing to take account of the Zuckerts' notion of "pedagogical reserve." My reason for not providing more than an allusion to the Zuckerts' phrase is that they leave it wholly unendowed. Carefully articulated, the notion of "pedagogical reserve"—though flawed—could capture something of Strauss's art. Yet the Zuckerts do not even begin to give a serious account, let alone provide a display, of how to read an author who practices an art of "pedagogical reserve."

Nor, contrary to Davis's suggestion, was my decision to focus chiefly on the Zuckerts' central and most extensive chapter arbitrary. The willingness to read Strauss's works in the manner he read the greatest authors of the past is the necessary precondition for the proper understanding of his writings. It is for this reason that I praised the Zuckerts for putting the question of how to read Strauss so prominently on the table. But as long as, and to the extent that, you answer this question incorrectly, you are bound to misunderstand Strauss. When well-known scholars publish a book designed to introduce students to Leo Strauss that is apt to inoculate them from understanding his thought, they do a serious disservice.

With regard to Myers's claim that the Zuckerts' "argument for the justice of the Socratic-Straussian philosopher...leaves perfectly visible the dangers to political society yet posed by the aporetic character of this sort of philosophic activity," I am not persuaded. One example should suffice. In his "Re-

statement on Xenophon's *Hiero*," Strauss writes:

There is therefore a natural attachment of man to man which is prior to any calculation of mutual benefit. This natural attachment to human beings is weakened in the case of the philosopher by his attachment to the eternal beings. On the other hand, the philosopher is immune to the most common and the most powerful dissolvent of man's natural attachment to man, the desire to have more than one already has and in particular to have more than others have; for he has the greatest self-sufficiency which is humanly possible.

On page 51 of their book, the Zuckerts quote this passage, but they do so in a peculiar way. Rather than provide the passage as a whole, they omit the sentence concerning the weakened character of the philosopher's attachment to his fellow man. In place of it and the "On the other hand" that opens the last quoted sentence, they substitute their own "Indeed." They thus transform a point of contrast into an emphatic affirmation. What in Strauss's hands had been a nuanced account of the philosopher's ambivalent relation to his fellow beings becomes in the Zuckerts' telling an ode to the philosopher's ordinary justice. Because passages of this sort are the rule rather than the exception in *The Truth about Leo Strauss*, I characterized the Zuckerts' Strauss as "formulaic, doctrinaire, and, worst of all, uninteresting."

As for my unwillingness to engage more fully the ostensible dilemma posed by the three "propositions" the Zuckerts discern in Strauss, my opinion is that the desire to understand Strauss's thought on such complex and problematic matters as modernity and America in terms of whether they are "good" or "bad" stems

from a deep misapprehension of the character of his thought. Consider this passage from *Thoughts on Machiavelli*:

In studying the *Discourses* we become the witnesses, and we cannot help becoming the moved witnesses, of that greatest of all youth movements: modern philosophy, a phenomenon which we know through seeing, as distinguished from reading, only in its decay, its state of depravation and its dotage.

Can this be well analyzed within the confines of whether modernity is good or bad?

With regard to Professor Cropsey's letter, I am not inclined to quibble with the first of the two things he finds valuable in the Zuckerts' volume—their "decisively laying to rest the misinformed criticisms of Strauss that circulate so widely these days." His words, in fact, echo my review's assertion that "the authors [of the three books under consideration] easily lay to rest the worst of the canards spread by his enemies in the academy and the media."

And finally, let me simply note that if Professor Drury's seeming contention that only a liberal democrat can be a friend of liberal democracy is correct, then Tocqueville was not a friend of liberal democracy.

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Algis Valiunas's essay "Encountering Islam" wrongly insists upon viewing the higher in the light of the lower (Spring 2007). As a highly respected teacher known to many readers of the *Claremont Review of Books* wisely argued, it is always sounder to view things—even the lower—in the light of the higher.

Valiunas views Islamic civilization in all its aspects as deriving from and reflecting militant Islam. For him, there is an unbridgeable gap between Islamic and Western civilization such that "the clash of

civilizations is real." Consequently, Edward Said's criticisms of travelers and novelists for portraying peoples of the Middle East as backward, bigoted, and sensual must be deemed incorrect. Valiunas—who demonstrates no knowledge of Islamic culture or of linguistic tools for acquiring it—claims to know about these matters better than Said, who grew up in the Middle East and had an excellent grasp of Arabic. To buttress his judgment, Valiunas appeals to his readers' prejudices.

How does Valiunas know that Edward Lane's portrait of Egyptian fanaticism is correct rather than a caricature? Does he believe that it applies to most Egyptian Muslims or even to most Muslims? What evidence buttresses his assertion that Muslims have always hated Jews and that this is not a reaction to Zionism? If an overblown caricature is a sufficient sociological fact for adducing a political lesson, I eagerly await Valiunas's analysis of how Jews fared under Christians in times prior to and after the 19th century.

What aspects of Arabic and Islamic culture and existence might Valiunas cite as evidence for his claim that they are backward and poor and that Burton's portrayal of "outlandish aspects of the Muslim faith" and of Islam as "a civilization short on real wisdom" are accurate? If it has to do with people praying en masse in public because such a sight is frightening, perhaps he will share his thoughts about Christmas Eve mass in St. Peter's Square or of pilgrims at Lourdes—perhaps even about Jews at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem.

Valiunas does not prove the accuracy of what the travelers say with respect to Islam or to Muslims. He notes that they say it and asserts that since they say it, it must be correct. He does it with wit and panache, to be sure, but his ignorance of Islam and of Arabic-Islamic culture is egregious. Someone intent upon learning from others, rather than on subjecting them to his own will, might look to Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and Ibn Khaldun—and many more could

be enumerated—to understand these matters. They learned much from Plato and Aristotle, preserved and interpreted their thought in the light of revelation, and passed a rich heritage on for those who wish to learn rather than to preserve old quarrels or foster new ones.

Charles E. Butterworth
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

Algis Valiunas replies:

It is true enough that I do not know Arabic and that Edward Said did. This ability gave him one more language to lie in.

In his recent book *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*, Robert Irwin—whose expertise in Arabic language and literature even so demanding a scholar as Charles E. Butterworth surely does not dispute—calls Said's *Orientalism* "a work of malignant charlatanry in which it is hard to distinguish honest mistakes from willful misrepresentations." In my essay I sought to expose some of Said's willful misrepresentations: the literature of Western travelers in Muslim lands as he describes it bears scant resemblance to the real thing. This literature often shows sympathy for, or at worst intelligent ambivalence toward, Muslim civilization, rather than the bottomless contempt and imperialist ambition Said and his followers prefer to see in it.

The Muslim hatred of Jews, for which I adduce the observations of Chateaubriand, John Lloyd Stephens, and Edward Lane, all of whom were appalled by it, is immortal. One of the sayings attributed to the Prophet Mohammed is, "Expel the Jews and the Christians from the Arabian peninsula." The 14th-century thinker Ibn Khaldun, from whom Butterworth says there is so much to learn, teaches that Jews are "renowned, in every age and climate, for their wickedness and slyness."

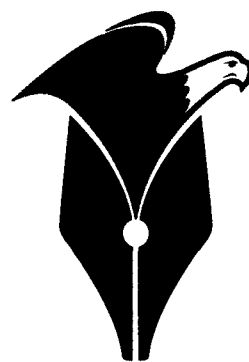
Richard F. Burton is a reliable reporter on Islamic civilization's unwisdom—the proliferation of su-

perstition at the expense of science in its most venerated university, the widespread hatred of the infidel—precisely because he is an enthusiast for certain aspects of that civilization. As for Ryszard Kapuscinski's remarking on the "ominous" sight of one million Iranians praying together in Tehran's main square, the prayers of Christian and Jewish worshippers have not been co-opted by a terror regime to speed the extinction of its enemies.

Butterworth is an expert on medieval Islamic philosophers, and, like many experts, evidently believes his field is indispensable to every matter of importance. There is a use for such thinkers here; but it is more to the point to interpret Islamic revelation in the light of what these philosophers learned from Plato and Aristotle than to interpret their thought in the light of Islamic revelation. While Alfarabi and Averroes profess to demonstrate to the pious that universal reason undergirds their faith, in fact they show reason subtly subverting revelation. In *The Attainment of Happiness*, Alfarabi teaches that philosophy, which demonstrates the truth by force of reason, is a superior activity to religion, which merely operates on the imagination. In *The Decisive Treatise, Determining What the Connection Is Between Religion and Philosophy*, Averroes indicates that there is a way of knowing God, through "a knowledge of intellectual reasoning," that is superior to the approach through Islamic law. The question Butterworth does not dare ask is what these advocates of reason would think of the current state of Islamic civilization; for that is not a world made by, or even having any resemblance to, the thinking of Averroes and Alfarabi.

Correction:

In the first paragraph of Hadley Arkes's essay "The Constitution and Mr. Bush" (Winter 2006/07), a misprint occurred. The sentence should have read: "What we were trying to do, more fundamentally, was give guidance to the courts when they came to confront that question."



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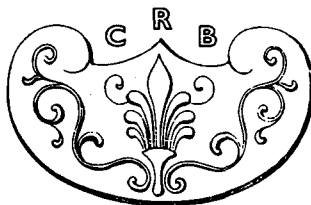
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IRAQ AND THE NEOCONSERVATIVES

Essay by Charles R. Kesler

AS ITS NEW COUNTERINSURGENCY strategy takes hold, the Bush Administration regards the war in Iraq with guarded optimism, pointing to encouraging signs that the "surge" is working or at least beginning to work. Baghdad appears to have pulled back from the edge of civil war. In Al Anbar province, local tribesmen have turned away from al-Qaeda and other foreign jihadists, and staked their future, at least temporarily, on cooperation with the Americans and the elected Iraqi government. The new Iraqi military and police forces are more numerous and better trained than ever, and suffer no shortage of recruits despite their predictable decimation by suicide bombers.

Even as the military tide in Iraq may be turning, however, political support in America for the war has reached new lows. Only two years after a GOP triumph in which the party renewed, indeed augmented, its control of the presidency, the House of Representatives, and the Senate, the voters in 2006 changed course, putting the Democratic Party back in charge of both houses of Congress for the first time in a dozen years. Although there were many reasons for the debacle, the public's dissatisfaction with the war, and with President Bush's leadership of it, loomed largest. His approval ratings have plunged to Nixonian depths, and his administration's reputation for competence now rivals Jimmy Carter's.

It was bad enough that the war continued. Neither the Gulf War of 1991 nor the campaign in Afghanistan after 9/11 had prepared

Americans for the protracted conflict in Iraq. Nor had the administration, of course, which itself was caught by surprise. But in war surprises happen. What the public found less forgivable was the widening gap between the administration's overall view of the war and the realities of the war zone. "Shock and awe" did neither, at least for very long. Though our troops liberated millions, the Iraqis seemed strangely ungrateful, even resentful. Saddam swung from the gallows, but the onlookers cheered not for a free Iraq but for a Shiite leader. The weapons of mass destruction proved elusive, but not as elusive as Iraqi democracy, the establishment of which had become central to the administration's war aims.

Despite scores of presidential speeches on why America was fighting in Iraq, the public grew less and less sure why this was *our* war. Americans wondered more and more about the war's purpose, about what our victory would consist in. That is why the least effective anti-war taunt was "no war for oil." At least a war for oil would be understandable; the means could be linked to an attainable end. By contrast, the critics' most effective charge was that the Bush Administration was out of its depth, that the whole enterprise was fantastic, disproportionate, unwise.

Even if the surge policy works as promised, the latter criticism will not go away. For the surge is calculated merely to stabilize Baghdad and its environs, to make it possible to win hearts and minds there and in crucial provinces like Al Anbar. That is not victory; it is at best

a necessary condition of victory over the jihadists, or of some other large purpose, not excluding American withdrawal. The surge is only a means, and what the American people wonders increasingly about is the end. If the administration or, more to the point now, Republican candidates for the presidency and Congress do not develop a better account of the purpose of U.S. policy in Iraq, then in 2008 the public may deal even more roughly with the party than it did in 2006.

The Bush Doctrine

AT THE HEART OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S case for the war on terror in general, and for the Iraq war in particular, is the Bush Doctrine, which emerged piecemeal in the months after the 9/11 attacks. Originally an endorsement of punitive war against the sponsors of the 9/11 atrocities as well as the states that harbored or abetted them, the Doctrine soon evolved to include preemptive and preventive war, waged unilaterally if necessary, against terrorists and regimes that were plotting attacks against the United States, even if those attacks were not imminent.

The final point in the Bush Doctrine, the commitment to the global advance of democracy, emerged partly as an inference from the new embrace of preemptive and preventive war. Regimes that might pass along WMDs to terrorists simply could not be trusted with such weapons. Therefore those regimes must in the interim be denied dangerous nuclear technol-

ogy, but in the long run be changed into peaceful, commercial democracies, which presumably would beat their WMDs into ploughshares. Regimes that export terrorism must in the long term be reformed, too. It would be far better to transform all these menacing regimes by subversion or conversion, however, than by preventive war, though the latter option is, as they say, never off the table. Hence arose that combination of soft and hard power which, in theory at least, characterized the Bush Doctrine's "forward strategy of freedom" in the Middle East.

Alongside this "realist" argument for democratization, the administration also advanced an "idealistic" one, discovering the imperative to spread democracy in America's own founding principles, or at least in a 20th-century, Wilsonian version of them. Both sides of this argument were important, because the administration claimed to have fused together the previously antagonistic strains of realism and idealism in American foreign policy. As President Bush declared in his Second Inaugural Address, "America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one."

The Second Inaugural represented the high-water mark of the Bush Doctrine. In that speech (January 20, 2005), Bush mentioned ideals and idealism nine times but did not mention Iraq once. The message seemed to be that, despite the bloody insurgency already raging for more than a year, Iraq would sooner or later fall into place as a successful application of the Doctrine. Harking back to 9/11, the "day of fire," the president explained:

We have seen our vulnerability—and we have seen its deepest source. For as long as whole regions of the world simmer in resentment and tyranny—prone to ideologies that feed hatred and excuse murder—violence will gather, and multiply in destructive power, and cross the most defended borders, and raise a mortal threat. There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom. We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.... So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

In trying to connect "the survival of liberty in our land" with "the success of liberty in other lands," Bush had to avoid two distasteful and unsustainable extremes. On the one hand, the link between our security and their liberty could be a nebulous kind of hope—that foreign nations would democratize more or less on their own (perhaps with some gentle hand-holding by the United Nations), and that our security would be an unintended beneficiary. But that would soon become a formula for frustration or resignation: American liberty "increasingly" would depend on something *beyond our control*, namely, other countries' domestic politics. At the opposite extreme, Bush's words might imply an imperial policy of democracy promotion or perhaps colonization, like the French in the early stages of their Revolution or Athens in the Peloponnesian War. Our freedom could not survive, in this view, unless we *imposed* democracy in "all the world," or at least the relevant parts of it, despite what the inhabitants of those parts might prefer.

Bush tried to find a prudent middle way between these idealist and ultra-realist traps, but he did not make much headway. He said that "the great objective of ending tyranny" is "the concentrated work of generations," an infelicitous phrase with no assignable meaning. He affirmed that "America's influence is not unlimited, but fortunately for the oppressed, America's influence is considerable, and we will use it confidently in freedom's cause." But he did not go on to promise that the U.S. military would be vastly enlarged, or radically re-tasked, or that any other concrete steps would be taken to match our influence to "the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Indeed, he counseled that "this is not primarily the task of arms," that "freedom, by its nature, must be chosen," and that the issue will in most instances be decided only when "the soul of a nation finally speaks."

Despite its noble sentiments and a few well-turned phrases, Bush's speech did not manage to match the means available to U.S. foreign policy to the ends that he proclaimed for it. In *The Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton emphasized that, particularly regarding national security, to will the end without willing the means is absurd. Bush's Second Inaugural is saved from absurdity by the fact that it wills, strictly speaking, neither the end nor the means. "Our country has accepted obligations," he said, "that are difficult to fulfill, and would be dishonorable to abandon." The U.S. is not necessarily in a quagmire but it is in a quandary: no one, least of all this president, wants to promise a series of Iraqs—further wars of liberation leading to democracy's spread in the Middle East and elsewhere. We will be doing well enough, he seemed to say, if we emerge from the current painful mess without dishonor.

Idealism and Prudence

THE PROBLEM IS THAT BUSH WANTS TO be both "idealistic" and prudent at the same time. He wants to take credit for proclaiming the lofty, breathtaking, galvanizing moral imperative, which is all of these things precisely because it is stubbornly opposed to the maxims of experience, impatient with the self-love integral to human nature, and insistent that duty requires maximum striving for the impossible dream, precisely because it seems impossible. That's his idealism. In that sense, global democracy is his War on Poverty. But at the same time he wants to be sober, responsible, and popular. He wants to bring democracy to every nation (and culture!) and to end tyranny in our world—but not immediately, and not by our efforts alone, and not at the expense of local customs and traditions, and not at the risk of our authoritarian allies, and not by force except in rare cases. These are all sensible limitations, of course, but what then is left of the original idealistic policy that made the blood race and the head swoon? He really can't have it both ways.

Or perhaps he can have it both ways—if there is a guarantee of some sort, in human nature or divine will, that history will make everything work out, that the idealist will ultimately be vindicated on realist grounds. And that is just the sort of guarantee that Bush routinely invokes in order to get his analysis from here to there, from prudence to idealism. "Eventually, the call of freedom comes to every mind and every soul," he said in the Second Inaugural. And so, he continued:

We go forward with complete confidence in the eventual triumph of freedom. Not because history runs on the wheels of inevitability; it is human choices that move events. Not because we consider ourselves a chosen nation; God moves and chooses as He wills. We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul.... History has an ebb and flow of justice, but history also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty.

Despite the disclaimer of inevitability, then, history does have "a visible direction" because history is the fitful, but certain, fulfillment of "the permanent hope of mankind." History guarantees that the soul's "longing" for freedom will eventually be satisfied in this world. In fact, in the deepest sense, history is the story of this unfolding of human nature and freedom. Bush's idealism is then the highest form of realism. Just

because political liberty has never been universal, then, does not mean that it won't be in the future. For the "Author of Liberty" has written the love of liberty into human nature—not merely as a longing of the soul, but as *the* longing of the soul.

For its inspiration, the Bush Doctrine looks both to Abraham Lincoln and to Woodrow Wilson. It aspires, on the one hand, to a new birth of democratic freedom around the world, and on the other, to a new world order based on a new freedom that at last makes tyranny obsolete, and the return of tyranny, except perhaps for a glitch now and then, impossible.

But unfortunately for the administration's foreign policy, the Lincolnian and Wilsonian premises cannot be reconciled.

Lincoln once spoke of slavery as part of the eternal struggle between justice and injustice. In his last debate with Stephen Douglas, he said:

That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

By contrast, Woodrow Wilson once spoke of World War I as "the culminating and final war for human liberty." Lincoln thought it impossible to end injustice and tyranny on earth; human nature, torn between right and wrong, divided between reason and passion, was permanently at war with itself. Wilson looked forward to the worldly culmination of liberty and justice. History guaranteed it, in some sense. President Bush sides with Wilson in the supreme confidence that history has "a visible direction," and that mortals are capable of "ending tyranny in our world."

In fact, he once went even further. At the National Cathedral in Washington, three days after 9/11, the president delivered one of his most beautiful and moving speeches. But in it he noted: "Just three days removed from these

events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." To end not merely tyrannical governments but evil itself—now that's idealism.

All of the president's prudent or at least realistic hedging thus comports poorly with the rhetoric inflating his goals. Prudence is supposed to connect moral principles and actual moral choices; but in Bush's case, his lofty universals seem increasingly disconnected from the rather nasty choices presented by Iraq. So, in practice, the Bush Doctrine has undergone a certain detumescence. When he announced the surge last January, he made clear that "America's commitment [in Iraq] is not open-ended," that "if the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people...." What happened to the vital connection between "the success of liberty in other lands," e.g., Iraq, and "the survival of liberty in our land"? Iraq happened, that's what. And one could discern other signs in that speech that the administration was more eager to find an honorable path out of the war than to insist on victory—and Iraqi democracy—no matter what. It isn't that, as his detractors sometimes say, Bush doesn't really believe in his own doctrine, that it is mere rhetoric. On the contrary, he believes in it so much that he is astounded by how poorly it has worked out so far in Iraq. Wasn't history, not to mention Providence, supposed to be on democracy's side?

Democracy and the Neocons

THERE HAS BEEN A SCRAMBLE AWAY from the Bush Doctrine, and from the Iraq war, by many who once were sympathetic to both. Notable among these new critics is Francis Fukuyama, whose *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (2006) is his explanation of the Bush Administration's errors, and an attempt at a pedigree of its mistakes. The book is also his letter of resignation from the neoconservative movement.

One of America's best social scientists, Fukuyama is at pains to disclaim any relation between the Bush Doctrine, especially as applied in Iraq, and his own well-known theory of "the end of history," drawn from Hegel and Alexandre Kojève, which holds, among other things, that liberal democracy is the final form of human government, the culmination of universal history, and thus the eventual destiny of all mankind. This attempt to absolve himself of any blame for the Iraqi mess would go down better if he acknowledged the obvious affinities between his theory and the administration's assumptions.

As its subtitle suggests, however, the most interesting questions raised in the book concern "democracy, power, and the neoconservative legacy." Like many pundits around the world, though with considerably more intelligence, Fukuyama attributes the democracy project and its baleful consequences in Iraq to the neoconservatives in and around the Bush Administration. His distinctive argument, however, is that in pushing this agenda the neocons have deserted their own intellectual roots.

To prove his point, Fukuyama provides a valuable capsule history of the neoconservative movement, starting with the young Trotskyists gathered in Alcove 1 at City College of New York in the late 1930s and early 1940s, continuing through the founding of *The Public Interest* in 1965, and running to the present. The story is familiar, but Fukuyama tells it well and pays particular attention to the intellectual and political differences between the neocons' first and second generations, exemplified respectively by Irving Kristol and his son, William (an old friend of mine, incidentally).

Leo Strauss was an important influence on both generations, though more so in the Kristols' circles than in those around Norman Podhoretz at *Commentary*. Many neocons who wrote for *The Public Interest* (co-founded, and edited for decades, by Irving Kristol) learned from Strauss to distrust the pretensions of modern mathematical, value-free social science. In various ways, they discovered the limitations of *homo economicus* and the importance of culture, habits, beliefs, and religion to human conduct; and they learned how to look at modernity through pre-modern eyes. Twice burned (first by Communism, then by '60s liberalism) and thrice shy of abstract doctrines of right, they found much to admire in American bourgeois, middle-class life, and set out to defend it against its cultured despisers on the radical Left and in the academy. The spirit of this defense was empirical, pragmatic, anti-utopian. Bourgeois liberal society was the best that could be attained under modern conditions. Their quarrel with the anti-bourgeois liberalism of the New Left and its successors was not that their brand of radicalism would lead to socialism or Communism in America, but that it would demoralize a decent society and degrade liberalism itself.

The neoconservatives' anti-utopianism extended to foreign policy, too. In fact, foreign policy plays a large role in Fukuyama's list of their four basic principles: that the character of a regime is central to its internal—and external—policies; that American power has been and can be a force for good in the world; "a distrust of ambitious social engineering projects"; and "skepticism about the legitima-



cy and effectiveness" of international law and institutions. Though this is a rather idiosyncratic list, it suffices for Fukuyama's purpose, which is to illustrate the divide between the neocon generations.

The first generation understood these principles in a basically "realist" spirit. They believed in vigorously pursuing the national interest (indeed, the phrase became the name of another journal founded by Irving Kristol). But as opposed to foreign policy realists like Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger, the neocons did not accept a value-free view of that national interest. America deserved to assert its interest because the purposes for which we used our power, by and large, were good. For instance, in the 1970s, they (along with most conservatives) denounced Kissinger's policy of détente for obscuring the moral distinctions between our regime and the Soviets'. In 1980, in the single most important neoconservative essay on foreign policy, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," published in *Commentary*, Jeane Kirkpatrick attacked the Carter Administration's naïve moralism, which had led it to undermine America's authoritarian allies (Nicaragua's Somoza, Iran's Shah) because of their imperfect human rights records, thus inadvertently strengthening Soviet Communism, an infinitely worse, totalitarian regime.

Fukuyama is on to something when he contrasts this spirit of moral realism with the second generation's moral idealism. Indeed, he could have bolstered his case by delving more deeply into the first generation's writings. Consider this interesting paragraph from Irving Kristol's "Utopianism and American Politics," originally published in 1971:

Witness the typically American fuss and furor...over whether the elections in South Vietnam were truly democratic—and if they were not, what we should then be doing about it. The assumption seems to be that the original purpose of our intervention in Vietnam was to establish parliamentary government there, and that the absence of such government presents us with a crisis. But this is a childish assumption. We did not intervene for any such purpose. (At least I hope we didn't—I can't bring myself to believe that the men who make our foreign policy were quite that idiotic.) Our intervention was to help establish a friendly, relatively stable regime which could coexist peacefully with the other nations of Southeast Asia. If such a regime prefers corrupt elections to the kind of overt military dictatorship that more usually prevails in that part of the world, this is its own affair. It constitutes no problem for us....

Considering how stalwart his son and his magazine, *The Weekly Standard*, have been in the promotion of the Bush Doctrine and the war in Iraq, one imagines that Kristol family gatherings could get pretty...lively. In fact, however, the differences, while real, can largely be explained by a change in circumstances. Here is a parallel passage from *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy* (2000), a book by Bill Kristol and Robert Kagan:

To many the idea of America using its power to promote changes of regime in nations ruled by dictators rings of utopianism. But in fact, it is eminently realistic. There is something perverse in declaring the impossibility of promoting democratic change abroad in light of the record of the past three decades. After we have already seen dictatorships toppled by democratic forces in such unlikely places as the Philippines, Indonesia, Chile, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Taiwan, and South Korea, how utopian is it to imagine a change of regime in a place like Iraq? ... With democratic change sweeping the world at an unprecedented rate over the past thirty years, is it "realist" to insist that no further victories can be won?

Kristol père and Kristol fils have some things to talk about, undoubtedly. But Bill's argument shuns any sort of precipitate idealism. It appeals to the same realism that moved his father. In the same neocon spirit, Bill looks at developments in the world and asks if democracy has not proven more resourceful and adaptable and contagious than any reasonable man, including Irving Kristol, would have thought 30 years ago.

This is not to say that many of the older neocons do not harbor doubts about the Bush Administration's Iraq policy. The late Jeane Kirkpatrick, for one, quietly expressed such doubts. (The senior Kristol has not written about the war.) But clearly, Fukuyama's notion that the younger generation has effectively abandoned neoconservatism needs further scrutiny.

Spreading Democracy

NEOCONSERVATISM BEGAN WITH A view of modern America as combining liberal democratic political institutions, and a bourgeois capitalist culture. The general opinion of first-generation neocons was that neither democracy nor capitalism, however, was self-sustaining. Daniel Bell, and Irving Kristol along with him, accepted a version

of the great German sociologist Max Weber's theory that religion, specifically the Protestant Ethic, was the origin and driving force of capitalist accumulation. As Protestantism dribbled away in the 20th century, capitalism found itself in a kind of moral void, for which neither Social Darwinism nor the managerial ethic was an adequate substitute. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976), Bell's magnum opus, argued that capitalism undermined the very culture that made it successful and morally admirable, to the extent that it ever was morally admirable. (Bell never embraced the neoconservative label, preferring to remain a social democrat.)

Kristol extended this analysis to American democracy. Even as capitalism depended on pre-capitalist religious impulses, so democracy's health depended on certain pre-democratic virtues of self-restraint, self-sacrifice, and statesmanship. He learned this argument from Strauss and especially from Strauss's student Martin Diamond, who was a close friend of Kristol's. Diamond had emphasized that America's political institutions were deliberately built on low but solid foundations. Designed by geniuses who took a dim view of human nature and a favorable view of the new science of politics, the Constitution created a government that would not require genius or even much republican virtue from citizens and office-holders. Instead, the institutions of government (e.g., bicameralism, separation of powers) would capitalize on politicians' self-interest, pitting them against each other in a grand scheme of checks and balances. Among citizens, a multiplicity of conflicting interest groups would mitigate the dangers of popular tyranny. Diamond worried that in the long run, however, this system would discourage and undermine the very virtues that had made possible its founding and its perpetuation through many crises. Kristol fleshed out this picture by offering various accounts of the culture that would be eroded by the polity's low expectations of human nature, pointing to the system's corrosive effects on religion and popular virtue (first agrarian, later bourgeois), and on Anglo-American legal culture and statesmanlike political education among the elites.

In general, then, the early neocons were cultural pessimists. They warned that capitalism and democracy were both drawing down the inherited cultural capital on which they depended; and neither capitalism nor democracy seemed capable of adding to that dwindling stock. They feared that bourgeois America, capable still of bourgeois virtues, was steadily losing ground to the bohemian, relativist America of the intellectuals. Robert Bork's *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (1996) is a reliable, if extreme, version of their pessimism.



But a strange thing happened on the way to Gomorrah. In the midst of decline, a resistance and regeneration began to take hold. It started as an intellectual and political revival, led by the mainstream conservative movement, which the neocons have never quite understood or appreciated. It broadened and deepened with the religious revival of the 1970s and 1980s, which helped to turn millions of evangelical Protestants and newly energized Catholics into faithful Republican voters. A religious revival was one of the last things that the neocons would have expected, but it gave them hope for the country. The electoral and policy successes of Reagan Republicanism, to which the neocons contributed in striking ways, confirmed that systemic renewal was possible, after all.

Though they had not anticipated these developments, the neocons easily adjusted to them. As anti-Romantics, they had never let their doubts about liberal society's viability ripen into an ideology of decline; as Democrats or ex-Democrats, they admired the moderate reform tradition (as they saw it) of 20th-century American liberalism. So individual neocons, mostly in the younger generation, had been advising and aiding politicians all along. The neocons' long-term pessimism never inhibited their short-term political efforts.

Intellectually, the crucial connection between the neocon generations came in the 1970s, when thinkers like Michael Novak began to argue that bourgeois or democratic culture had greater resources for replenishment than their fellow neocons had realized. Novak argued that far from being parasitic on Protestantism, democratic capitalism was itself a spiritual calling, a Christian mission in which entrepreneurs partook in God's own graceful creativity. Properly understood, capitalism reinforced Christianity (including Catholicism), and vice versa, though of course neither could be reduced to the other. Richard John Neuhaus and others focused on civil society, the realm of voluntary associations that Tocqueville had long ago pointed to as essential to a healthy democracy. By preventing government from usurping their functions, and by encouraging them in other ways, mediating institutions like churches could thrive, and revivify American culture.

In tracing the connections between culture and politics, neoconservative scholars followed in Tocqueville's and ultimately Aristotle's steps: Aristotle's "regime" was all about how politics shaped culture, and culture politics. For the first generation of neocons, many of whom were sociologists, culture probably seemed the predominant force. The second generation came increasingly to share Aristotle's confidence in the power of politics to shape culture—and thus of American power to help spread liberal

democracy to countries whose culture hitherto had been profoundly inhospitable.

To be sure, as Bill Kristol noted above, since the mid-1970s the world has seen a democratic wave roll over country after country. This fact, plus the ease with which the former Soviet Union let its empire and then itself collapse, helps to explain the contemporary neocon enthusiasm for democracy promotion. If democracy could come to Estonia and sub-Saharan Africa, why couldn't it come to Iraq?

Political societies are not homogeneous, however; and every political wave eventually crests. The neocons got carried away by the apparent ease with which democratic transitions took place around the world. The conspicuous exception to democracy's spread was the Arab Middle East. That could have meant, as the neocons concluded, that its turn was next. But it could also have meant that there were cultural, religious, and political factors that had made it resistant to the democratic wave—and would continue to do so.

In *America at the Crossroads*, Fukuyama provides a neoconservative critique of today's neoconservatives, summoning the fathers, as it were, as witnesses against the sons. What he does not see, however, is that the democracy agenda has its roots in both generations. It is, roughly speaking, a combination of two ideas. The first is the fathers' notion that modern democratic institutions are rightly built upon enlightened self-interest and presuppose very little in citizen virtue, and that the theory of modern democracy rests on universal and very ordinary traits of human nature. The second is the sons' confidence in the ability of democratic politics to generate its own complementary culture. The first assures that modern democratic institutions—elections, representative government, free markets—are, in theory, within reach of almost any people on earth. The second reassures that even when these institutions are planted in inhospitable cultures, a pro-democratic culture will be able to grow from them.

Neocon Mistakes

THE INTELLECTUAL SOURCES BEHIND the neoconservatives' role in shaping and defending the Bush Administration's "forward strategy of freedom" thus reach deeply into the history of the movement. Doubtless, the second generation is more keen on democratization than the first, but the second's case for global democracy depends on a premise shared with the first.

At any rate, one thing that distinguishes neocons from all other conservatives is their willingness to identify their foreign policy with Woodrow Wilson. They don't much like Wil-

son himself ("hopelessly naïve," Max Boot calls him) but they are happy to think of themselves as "hard Wilsonians" or, in Fukuyama's case, "realistic Wilsonians." That is, they agree with his ends but not his means. Most of the neocons reject Wilson's reliance on international law and organizations to keep the peace; they prefer to rely, in hard cases, on the use of force by the U.S., alone or with its allies.

What of those ends? Wilson pledged to make the world safe for democracy, which is not the same thing as making the world democratic. But like President Bush and the neoconservatives, Wilson reasoned that to make the world safe for democracy would require making at least the leading nations of the world democratic. Also like Bush and some of today's neocons, he expected the currents of Progress to help speed the project along. But unlike them, Wilson rejected as impracticable the notion of rapidly democratizing most of the world. It was out of this vestige of realism that Wilson turned to the League of Nations to enforce international order. He may have been naïve, but he was not naïve about everything.

To make the world safe for democracy may require trying to keep some important nations democratic, but it cannot require making them all democratic because that is impossible, as almost everyone would admit. Besides, contra Wilson, the primary question for us is to make the world safe for American democracy. From that point of view, it is a judgment of prudence, not of categorical moralism, which countries are worth our blood and treasure. (In principle, most neocons would agree, but they do not draw the right conclusion regarding Iraq.) Germany and Japan after World War II were worth it. We did not want a third world war with them, and besides, they stood at the ramparts of the actual third world war, the Cold War, that was then about to begin. We wanted and needed to keep them on our side. And finally, they were good candidates for democratization, having enjoyed high levels of economic and social development and national unity, and having had some experience of parliamentary government.

As an abstract matter, Americans would like to see every nation in the world enjoy the blessings of liberty and democracy, because we know how fine these are. But the matter at hand is a question not of good will but of good policy. Is Iraq worth it?

President Bush and the neocons make a strong case that Iraq is important to America's own security, but the case for toppling Saddam was much stronger than the one for staying indefinitely to buy time for the Iraqis to democratize. Saddam was in violation of the peace agreements he had signed to end the Gulf War; had invaded his neighbors and would likely do



so again; was supporting terrorism and sponsoring anti-Americanism throughout the Arab world, including a failed plot to assassinate former President Bush; refused to dispel, and indeed encouraged, the impression that Iraq had chemical, biological, and nuclear WMDs, some of which Saddam had used before; and withal he was a bloodthirsty tyrant. The writ to use force against him and his regime was cogent and persuasive. But the decision to turn that deterrent, punitive, and preventive action into the occasion for elaborate democratic reconstruction was, alas, ill-conceived. Iraq was not *that* important to us. It could seem that important to us, as important as Germany and Japan had been, only by imagining that an utterly transformed Iraq would become an outpost of liberal democracy in the Middle East, a bulwark against terrorism and Islamic fanaticism; and that Iraq in turn would utterly transform the whole Middle East into a land of milk and honey, not to mention democracy and peace.

It is never a good idea to multiply improbabilities as the basis of one's foreign policy.

In fairness to the president and the neocons, the decision to stay on as an occupying, democratizing force was taken on the assumption that the mission would be short and easy. Here the law of unintended and unanticipated consequences, the byword of the old neoconservatives, struck with a vengeance. (The neocons justly complained that the administration skimmed on the number of troops in theater. Hence Max Boot's response to the charge that Bush has a neoconservative foreign policy: "If only it were true!")

Still, underlying the neocons' miscalculation was a weakness shared to some degree by the first and second generation alike, a tin ear for the genius of American democracy. They have always (there are exceptions, like Michael Novak) been a little suspicious of its first principles, of any first principles. The self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence strike them as slightly presumptuous—a little too much like Enlightenment abstractions, perhaps, for their own good. They don't strike George W. Bush that way, but what separates the Bush Doctrine from neoconservatism proper is precisely the note of evangelical fervor that animates his policy. The term "bourgeois" is also a dead giveaway that the neocons are not understanding the American people as they understand themselves. Americans don't think of themselves as bourgeois, even when they know what the word means. The term is academic, lifeless—in fact, a Rousseauian abstraction right out of the Enlightenment. It reveals the sense in which, for all

their advocacy of democracy, many neocons nevertheless regard it as a rather middling, bourgeois thing. Democracy is a middle-class thing, and to that extent they are right. But many neocons often don't quite see what a high and difficult calling republicanism is. Paradoxically, their biggest mistake is not thinking too highly of democracy but not thinking highly enough of it. By underestimating it and what it requires of its citizens, they conclude that democracy is more easily exportable and transferable than it really is. And they neglect all the other forms of government between the best and the worst—forms that might be more congenial to many countries capable of something better than tyranny but incapable, at least now, of the best sorts of republicanism.

Bush embraced democratization as a kind of historical and divine imperative. The neoconservatives came to democratization from a far more modest view of democracy's virtues and benefits. But they ended up in roughly the same place.

It is difficult, though not impossible, to have an enduring liberal democracy unless it gets its first principles right, and unless it cultivates them by means of a good constitution and civic character. But this watchword is less prominent in the present-day expansion of democracy than you might expect. If it were, many democracies formed in the past few decades would not qualify. Most of them were not well founded, if they were founded at all; a lot of them just happened, without much forethought or civic conviction, and could just as easily unhappen.

Clarity and agreement on liberal principles was not foremost, either, in the minds of the Americans busily engaged in founding Iraqi democracy. There, in the usual State Department fashion, the controlling idea seemed to be to get as many factional leaders as possible around the biggest possible table, induce them to compromise or postpone their differences, subscribe to a pastiche of principles, often contradictory, that the U.N. will applaud, usher in the coalition government, issue their paychecks—and call it democracy and a day's work well done.

After the Bush Doctrine

THE OVERARCHING POLITICAL PROBLEM facing the administration is that the president has vastly over-promised in respect to Iraq. His words on the subject now carry little credibility beyond the 28% of the public who will support him regardless. If the surge brings greater stability to Iraq, he may be able to recoup some of that lost support, but probably not much. If the surge fails and

Bush approves a phased withdrawal from Iraq, this bitter pill will hardly be a boon for him. If Osama bin Laden were captured or killed, Bush might enjoy a surge of his own, but only temporarily, because removing Osama from the scene will only make the Iraq war look more pointless and increase the pressure to leave. If terrorists succeeded in striking America again, the people would rally to Bush's side; but unless the terrorists came from Iraq, the administration would come under renewed pressure to close down the Iraqi war and hunt down the relevant suspects.

If Republicans mean to win in 2008, they will have to separate themselves, gently but unmistakably, from the Bush Doctrine. While honoring the president and all that he has achieved in the overall war on terrorism, candidates would be well advised to find new language in which to cast the war against the jihadists. The truth is that the punitive and preventive war components of the Bush Doctrine remain vital to national security and eminently defensible before the voters. But so identified is the Doctrine with democratization and the war in Iraq that it is doubtful whether Republican candidates could persuade the electorate to discriminate neatly between the Doctrine's parts. Within its global campaign for democracy there are reasonable, modest initiatives that might be preserved, too, but so wrapped up are these with the overall discredited tone of idealism that it will probably be hard, once again, to distinguish them publicly.

Might it be possible to endorse the whole Bush Doctrine but promise to interpret it in a less militant and more cautious way? The paradox—interpreting it more moderately than its author did—would prove awkward. And does any candidate want to keep reminding the voters of his connection, his dependence on George W. Bush?

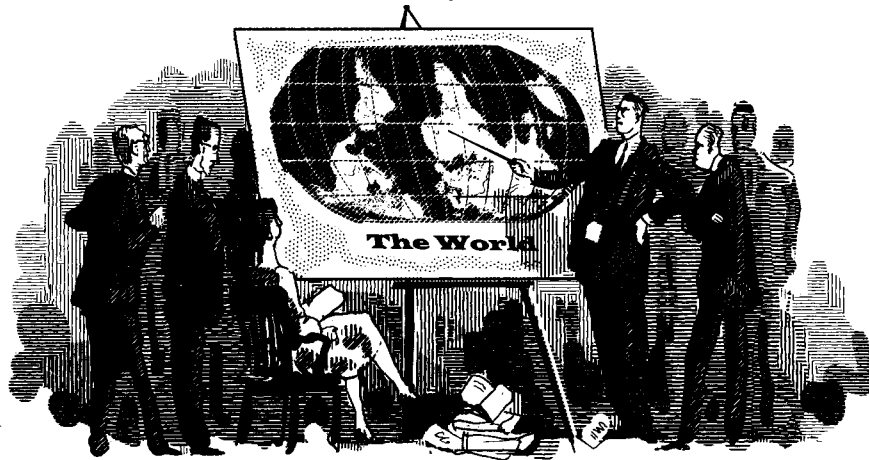
In his Second Inaugural, the president commented that in Iraq we have "accepted obligations that are difficult to fulfill, and would be dishonorable to abandon." That's an understatement. All honor to him and our brave troops for liberating "tens of millions" in Afghanistan and Iraq. "By our efforts," he said, "we have lit a fire as well—a fire in the minds of men...and one day this untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of our world." It is an unfortunate metaphor, mixing heat with light, destruction with illumination. But then again, perhaps it is the perfect metaphor for our predicament in Iraq.

Charles R. Kesler is editor of the Claremont Review of Books.

INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA, by George Tenet.
HarperCollins, 576 pages, \$30

Safe For Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA, by John Prados.
Ivan R. Dee, 736 pages, \$35



PERCEPTIVE OBSERVERS HAVE LONG recognized the insufficiency and dysfunction of U.S. Intelligence in general and of the CIA in particular. David M. Barrett's masterly *The CIA and Congress: The Untold Story From Truman to Kennedy* (2005) notes that legendary *New York Times* national security correspondent Hanson Baldwin derided the CIA as full of "chair warmers" and "empire builders" even in its salad days. The great radio journalist Fulton Lewis, Jr., said that the CIA had few of the sources it claimed—"if any." And Congressmen John Taber and Henry M. Jackson, the CIA's principal mid-century overseers, agreed. There has always been an enormous gap between what presidents, Congress, and the public imagine the CIA knows and what it can really deliver. Occasional tidbits of privileged information get lost in a sea of the Agency's own opinions. Its "estimates" have always been inherently political documents, and its executive summaries are written to be leaked.

Every president (with the exception of the first President Bush, a former CIA head) has fumed about being embarrassed by the Agency's failures or undercut by its ploys. But none has yet disabused himself and the American people of the myth, which Hollywood loves to reinforce, that America is served by real spies, valiant men of derring-do. The mainstream media have given top cover to this fiction, indulging conspiracy theories of the CIA as right-wing imperialism's invisible hand. The Agency eats it up.

The CIA has always valued fighting battles in Washington more than fighting America's battles abroad. Thomas Powers's *The Man who Kept the Secrets* (1979) relates how Frank Wisner, one of the Agency's founding greats, would "drop everything" to get "Scotty" Reston of the *Times* "back on the beam." Because CIA officials have always seen themselves primarily as policymakers, feeding pet journalists (Joseph and Stewart Alsop in the 1950s, *Newsweek's* Michael Isikoff today) is standard practice. There is no comparison between the treatment that the CIA gives to journalists and scholars (and to their inside sources) who are part of the Agency's long campaigns on behalf of its point of view, and to those who are not. Lately, the CIA has raised the stakes by encouraging its officers to publish books. Michael Scheuer's *Imperial Hubris* (2004) and Richard Clarke's *Against All Enemies* (2004) were part of its campaign against George W. Bush's re-election. Although its policies and prejudices usually match those of liberal presidents (they never match those of conservative ones), they are always its own.

AT THE CENTER OF THE STORM IS THE latest look at the CIA from the inside. Former director George Tenet begins by contrasting himself with his predecessor, John Deutch, who told "the *New York Times Magazine* that he did not find many first-class intellectuals at the Agency. 'Compared to uniformed officers...they certainly are not as competent, or as understanding of what their

relative role is and what their responsibilities are.'" Tenet never disputes this characterization, but notes that Deutch destroyed himself by saying such things. Tenet prefers to please the Agency, lauding its "clandestine service"—some 98% of whom serve under purely nominal cover and lead lives as safe as those of any other bureaucrats—as "men and women who dared to risk it all every day to protect our nation" and people "who have done things you have not read about in spy novels." The examples he gives, like a routine diplomatic meeting with a Taliban representative, are underwhelming to say the least. The Agency backed Tenet for its director because he had overpraised and overfunded it when he served on the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. It supported him as director because he continued to follow his penchant for serving those on whom his interests depend. Accurately, he describes his own intellectual contribution as adding "color" to its briefings. And now he has his reward: board memberships and consultancies at Guidance Software, L-1 Identity Solutions, and The Analysis Corp. (TAS) worth some \$2.2 million a year to him—companies funded in part by contracts awarded by the folks whose careers he made at the CIA.

Tenet's book is filled with bald self-interest. In one episode, the author tells us that at the Wye Plantation in 1998 he went to the brink of souring what might have been peace between Palestinians and Israelis by threatening to resign if President Clinton commuted Israeli spy

Jonathan Pollard's life sentence. Tenet mentions none of the arguments surrounding the Pollard case, only that if Pollard's release had resulted from a conference in which he had participated, "I would be effectively through as CIA director.... I would have no more capital left with my troops.... I will never be able to lead my building." So much for justice or the national interest.

Understanding Tenet's account of U.S. Intelligence in the context of personal and bureaucratic interest makes perfect sense of his otherwise lame explanations for the Agency's failings. In May 1998, for example, Senate oversight chairman Richard Shelby asked why the CIA was surprised when India and Pakistan exploded nuclear weapons. The former director explains that, though he "didn't have a clue," failure to warn of the test really wasn't "colossal" because "the identification of the Indian nuclear test preparations was a difficult intelligence-collection and analytical problem." There was lots of evidence that the nukes were going to be tested, but the CIA "did not sufficiently accept that Indian politicians might do what they had openly promised—conduct a nuclear test." How could the CIA be expected to decipher such a challenge?

THE BOOK IS CLEAR THAT THE CIA, and it alone, is the arbiter of what the world is really like. Things exist insofar as the CIA acknowledges them. And if an unacknowledged reality flares up, the Agency is blameless because, by definition, that reality was beyond human understanding. Any perception of the outside world that conflicts with the CIA's is, by definition, partial, unprofessional, and illegitimate. This attitude became official during the Carter Administration when the CIA renamed its analytical shop "The National Foreign Assessment Center" (NFAC). Though it dropped this label in 1981 after Reagan officials mocked its pretense of being "The Ministry of Truth," it hasn't changed its tune. Thus Tenet writes: "Policy makers are allowed to come to independent judgments about what the intelligence may mean.... What they cannot do is overstate the intelligence itself.... They must clearly delineate between what the intelligence says and the conclusions they have reached" (emphasis added). In other words, the CIA's duty to say what the evidence is (and is not), and to distinguish between facts and conclusions limits the exercise of their nominal superiors' judgment.

Tenet and the CIA wield this claim as a shield against their failures, and as a sword against their domestic rivals. The Agency confuses "the intelligence itself" and "what the intelligence says" with its own conclusions, dis-

missing any facts that lead to contrary conclusions as "cherry picking," "fragments," or "their own set of facts." The CIA argues strictly by its own authority, and by making up standards to fit its needs in any given circumstance. In 2002, the Agency had concluded that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Tenet certified this by prominently sitting behind then-Secretary of State Colin Powell as he delivered his February 5, 2002 testimonial to the United Nations. In his book, Tenet explains: "It would have been helpful to have clarified that the use of the words 'we judge' and 'we assess' meant we were making analytical judgments, not stating facts." Confusing fact and judgment in one direction was convenient at the time. Distinguishing them became convenient later.

Despite these confusions, he still maintains that "one thing is certain, we consistently told the Congress and the administration that the intelligence did not show any Iraqi authority, direction, or control over any of the many specific terrorist acts carried out by al-Qa'ida." That's weasel-worded longhand for saying Saddam Hussein's Iraq was not responsible for terrorism. But why should we care whether Iraq's government bodies exercised "authority, direction, and control" over specific acts? Isn't it more significant to ask about the many ways in which Saddam's Iraq contributed to terrorism? Tenet had informed the Senate in February 2002 that Iraq "has also had contacts with al-Qa'ida. Their ties may be limited by diverging ideologies, but the two sides' mutual antipathy toward the United States and the Saudi royal family suggests that tactical cooperation between them was possible." He acknowledges that Saddam provided training, safe haven, and contacts to al-Qaeda and lots of other terrorists. He also mentions that the vice president's staff brought "such detailed knowledge on people, sources, and timelines that the senior CIA analytic manager doing the briefing that day simply could not compete." But Tenet tells us that the CIA discounted "reporting that suggested a deeper relationship" between Saddam and al-Qaeda because "[r]egional analysts who focus on geographic areas believed that fundamental distrust stemming from stark ideological differences... significantly limited the cooperation that was suggested by the reporting" (emphasis added). In short, Tenet and the CIA simply dismissed as opinion the facts that displeased them, and called facts their own favorite beliefs.

But the former director makes one unassailable point. Taunting his rivals, he writes, "And [Undersecretary of Defense Douglas] Feith should have had the courage to tell us that his opening slide, shown to the White House, said in essence that CIA analysis stinks." In fact, though the Pentagon's leadership knew that

CIA analysis stinks, they never had the courage to make that charge explicitly. They did not because they knew that President Bush would not listen. As a result of his faith in the CIA, the U.S. affirmed the existence of WMDs that did not exist, while denying the cooperation between secular and religious anti-Americans who have been killing our citizens all over the globe.

THE CIA'S PURPOSE IN THESE SHENANIGANS is to control foreign policy by constraining the minds of those who are supposed to be in charge of it. But one of the Agency's functions, "covert action," does require its practitioners to think and act directly in foreign policy. As one might expect then, arguments over the CIA's covert activities are really about the direction of U.S. foreign policy. All governments from time immemorial have related to one another partly through a variety of subversive practices. But only after World War II did America place them into a single category and restrict them to a single agency. John Prados chronicles the history of America's "covert action" in his new book, *Safe For Democracy*. Covert action is no longer in fashion in today's CIA, which is one reason why so many of the Agency's officers were willing to talk with Prados, a senior fellow at the National Security Archive in Washington. Much of the book is devoted to bureaucrats' resumes, their strategies vis-à-vis one another, and what they ate for lunch.

Unlike in his previous books (e.g., *Presidents' Secret Wars*, 1986, and *Hoodwinked*, 2004), Prados now sees secret operations not merely as cover for nasty right-wing imperialism but as evidence of our government's inability to choose between hard options. The CIA's promise of covert action has let policymakers imagine they can do big things—especially spreading democracy—on the cheap with inadequate means and commitment, and without thinking them through. Every administration has regarded "covert operations as a third option between doing nothing and engaging in full scale warfare." But "far from being a trump card, covert operations...[are] not a substitute for policy."

As with most discussions of foreign policy, the heart of this book is not what America should do about foreign countries, but what America itself should be. The author wants to constrain U.S. power because Americans are not what he wishes they were, and consequently are unlikely to play the world role that Woodrow Wilson, "a great President and visionary," set out for them. Prados reduces that role to "democracy," meaning policies that please him and his fellow liberals, and "internationalism," meaning that bureaucrats from many nations, led by the folks at the CIA, should take the



world's interests into account. This book really is his sources' mirror.

Prados credits an "impressively competent cadre of secret warriors" for covert action's successes. But his account—which fits with my own experience—tells precisely the opposite story. With a few exceptions like the late Ted Shackley, who ran the government's secret war in Laos during the 1960s, these "warriors" have been sorcerers' apprentices. You would not trust electricians of comparable competence to wire your house. Rather, America's successes and failures have been due to the extent that its covert acts were *coherent* parts of larger overt plans that depended on big, obvious assets.

For example, Prados repeats the standard CIA view that the suitcases of money the Agency delivered to Alcide de Gasperi and to Italian socialists after World War II made the difference between a Communist Italy and one aligned with the West. In reality, the under-the-table money that clever Italian politicians milked from the United States hardly mattered. Ordinary Italians in 1948 were more pro-American than the Americans. They equated Marshall Plan aid with economic survival and were in close contact with their envied relatives in America. Even the Communists would have emigrated to America rather than to Russia.

The author similarly credits the money passed to key generals as the reason why the 1953 Iranian coup against Mohammed Mosaddegh succeeded. In fact, the generals carried out the coup because the covert money was a token of the overt support that America was devoting to regime change in Iran, and because at that time the U.S. had given people every

reason to believe that it would not and could not be denied.

Because the CIA has misunderstood the reasons for its early successes, it has suffered mostly disasters ever since. Its covert activities have been small in comparison to the goals that they were expected to achieve, often carried a disproportionate part of the burden of overt policy, or even ran athwart overt policy. This is the nature of "the third option." Arguments between proponents of option A and option B are resolved by agreeing on option C, which contains watered-down elements of A and B. Sometimes, because the government agrees that the situation demands some action but can't agree on any major public action, the covert action becomes the alternative to "doing nothing or sending in the Marines." It would be more accurate to say that it is the alternative to doing nothing and admitting that one is doing nothing.

IN SHORT, PRADOS DISLIKES COVERT ACTION because it has not been effective, but would dislike it more if it had been. The book's title masks the Left's perennial agenda of encouraging its own ends by depriving America of coercive means. So, what sort of democracy does Prados think we should be spreading?

What he says about psychological warfare in the Truman years is typically revealing:

And the United States cheapened the coin of its appeal by covert actions that, to foreign populations, did not represent American policies democratically arrived at. At home the stagnant civil rights of minorities, the loyalty investigations and

McCarthyism of the 1950s, like the red baiting of the left in later decades, [meant that] Presidents...sending the spooks out to make the world safe for democracy, were...putting a batter in the box who already had one strike against him.

This is transparent projection. The reader is supposed to believe that foreigners—none of whom, including the British, have any say in their countries' foreign policies—look askance at America because not all the details of its foreign policies are decided "democratically." These very foreigners, many of whom daily experience pressures for loyalty to states where privilege is the rule of life and whose partisan conflicts are rougher than Americans can imagine, are supposedly shocked that Americans do not live in perfect equality and sometimes speak unkindly about one another. It is clear enough that Prados is expressing his own judgment on America, not that of any foreigners.

George Tenet's *At the Center of the Storm* and John Prados's *Safe for Democracy* show, each in its own way, that the CIA serves not the United States but its own corporate interests and its partisan vision. It will continue to do so until a president who understands this remakes U.S. intelligence from the ground up.

Angelo M. Codevilla is professor of international relations at Boston University, a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute, and the author most recently of *No Victory, No Peace* (Rowman & Littlefield). During the Reagan Administration, he served as a U.S. Senate Staff member dealing with oversight of the intelligence services.

Book Review by Wilfred M. McClay

A LEFT-HANDED SALUTE

The Intellectuals and the Flag, by Todd Gitlin.
Columbia University Press, 192 pages, \$24.95



THIS SHORT, LOOSELY ORGANIZED collection of occasional essays makes for a surprisingly interesting and valuable book, well worth reading and pondering. Sociologist and radical activist Todd Gitlin, who has been a figure in the American Left since his Vietnam-era days in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), has made a serious effort to reflect on the failures of the American Left since the 1960s. The criticisms he puts forward here, which are inevitably self-criticisms in part, are unsparing and penetrating, made all the more memorable by his unacademic, direct, and often epigrammatic style.

Gitlin's criticism is relentless, and will win him few new friends on the Left, though it will likely energize the many enemies he already has there. He sees a story rich with irony, in which it has been precisely the Left's most triumphant expressions in contemporary American life that led it into the spiritual wasteland in which it now finds itself. And for this lost condition, he believes, the Left has only itself to blame. It embraced the smug disassociation from existing society epitomized in the sweeping call by émigré philosopher and '60s hero Herbert Marcuse for a "Great Refusal" of the confining ideals and crass manipulations of the modern capitalist political economy. But the embrace of Marcuse's influential but ill-defined slogan has amounted in practice to a "great withdrawal," a narcissistic retreat into self-proclaimed "marginality," an obsession with ever more minute forms of identity politics and the infinite "problematizing" of "truth," a reflexive opposition to America and the West, and an immurement in

"theories" whose radicalism is so pure that they never quite touch down to earth—follies all underwritten and protected by the perquisites and comforts of academia.

Gitlin argues that the results may have benefited individual leftists, who have feathered their own nests quite nicely by fusing radicalism and academic careerism, but they have been unambiguously disastrous for the Left as a political force outside the academy. "If we had a manual," Gitlin remarks, "it would be called, *What is Not to Be Done*." The Great Refusal turns out to have been little more than "a shout from an ivory tower," an advertisement of futility that was unable to conceal the despair, paralysis, and general contempt, including self-contempt, that lay behind it.

ONE OF THE MANY NEGATIVE SIDE effects of this Refusal has been a summary rejection of patriotic belief. There is no denying this, and Gitlin, to his credit, does not try. Indeed, this self-imposed restriction and its malign consequences are the deep subject of the book. He provides an honest account of the reasons for his generation's disenchantment with patriotism—an account that helps explain why, even now, the term almost never escapes the lips even of mainstream liberal Democrats without being prefaced by the indignant words "impugning" and "my." For Gitlin's generation, the "generation for whom 'the war' meant Vietnam and perhaps always will," it could be said that the "most powerful public emotion in our lives was *rejecting* patriotism." Patriotism became viewed as, at best, a pre-

text, and at worst, an abandonment of thought itself. It became of interest only in so far as it entered into calculations of political advantage. Far from being a sentiment that one might feel with genuine warmth and intelligent affection, it was merely a talisman, which, if used at all, served chiefly to neutralize its usefulness as a weapon in the hands of others, by making it into a strictly personal preference that others were forbidden to question: "my" patriotism.

It may be that this state of affairs will continue, at least for a certain segment of Gitlin's generation. One reason the Iraq war has been so galvanizing to that segment is that it offered badly needed reconfirmation of the very premises around which they had built their adult lives. And let it be said that those premises are not completely cockeyed. The claims of the nation-state should never be regarded as absolute and all-encompassing. To do so would violate the nature of the American experiment itself, which understands government as accountable to higher imperatives, which we express in various ways: in the language of natural rights, for example, or of "one nation under God." The possibility of dissent against the nation for the sake of the nation is built into that formulation. The dissenters are right about that.

But by the same token, the claims of critical detachment have their limits, both practically and morally. For one thing, there needs to be a clear and responsible statement of what those higher imperatives are. And even then, the habitual resort to the ideal of dissent "against the nation for the nation" can easily become indistinguishable in practice from yet another

manifestation of the Great Refusal, in which the second "nation" is a purely imaginary one to be "achieved"—and the "troops" one "supports" are entirely distinct from the actual causes for which they are risking their lives, and such "support" shows no respect for the series of conscious choices that made them into "troops" rather than civilians. When we make our commitments to one another entirely contingent, then we have made no commitments at all. There will always be reasons to hold back, always sufficient reasons to say No, if the standard against which one judges the nation is an ahistorical and abstract and imaginary one, and the only consideration in view is the purity of one's own individual position.

FOR THE LEFT, WITH ITS TRADITIONAL emphasis upon *fraternité*, or the cultivation of human solidarity and communal values, such realities are particularly difficult to reconcile with an ethos of limitless criticism. To say that we are a part of one another—or even to acknowledge that man is by nature a "political animal," thinking here of Aristotle and not of James Carville—is not merely to say that we should deliberate together; it is also to say that, at some point, the discussion ceases and we make a commitment to one another to act together. Furthermore, it is to say that we cannot sustain serious, demanding, and long-term commitments to one another if those commitments are regarded as provisional and easily revoked for light and transient causes. We make an agreement and we agree to stand by it. Call it a contract, a covenant, or a Constitution, it is the same general kind of commitment, a commitment not merely of the intellect but also of the will.

For any freely organized political undertaking, this vital qualification presents a difficulty. But for the Left, it becomes a profound dilemma. It is no accident, if I may put it this way, that the more attractive elements of the Left also tend to be the most schismatic and ineffectual, while the uglier ones tend to be the most disciplined and unified, in which solidarity becomes a byword for the silent obedience of the herd.

Gitlin's generation accomplished much more than it wanted to by "demystifying" the nation and popularizing the idea that all larger solidarities are merely pseudo-communities invented and imposed by nation-building elites. By doing so, it also made "the nation" into an entity unable to command the public's loyalty and support—and willingness to endure sacrifices—for much of anything at all, including the kind of far-reaching domestic transformations that are the Left's most cherished aspirations. The hermeneutic of suspicion knows no

boundaries, so that what is true for war-making is also true for Social Security or national health insurance. The fact is, the Left needs the nation, too, and needs it all the more in an era in which the cause of international socialism is but a faint and discredited memory. The nation is all the Left has left, whether it knows it or not.

Along with a small number of others on the left, Gitlin now recognizes this fact, and recognizes that it was a grievous error to have abandoned patriotism. His book is an effort to inch his way back toward an embrace of the national idea, without which the Left has nowhere to go, but to do so in ways that carefully avoid the embrace of "conservative" ideas of patriotism.

THE ABANDONMENT OF PATRIOTISM, he says, was a sure recipe for political irrelevance: how can one hope to sway an electorate toward which one has all but declared one's comprehensive disdain? Now there is another reason. The events of 9/11 convinced him that the civilized world faces a deadly threat and that the exercise of American power in the world is not always an unmitigated evil—it may even be desirable and necessary. He was one of the many New Yorkers who flew the American flag out his window after 9/11 (though by his own admission he did not keep it up very long). He supported the invasion of Afghanistan, and sees the necessity of a continuing American struggle against the forces of jihadism.

Perhaps, he argues, there can be a "patriotic left" that stands somewhere "between Cheney and Chomsky," here borrowing the words of Michael Tomasky, in much the same way that the anti-Communist liberals of the '40s and '50s stood between, say, McCarthy and Stalin. Such a Left would be critical—it being the Left's business, in his view, to be critical—but critical "from the inside out," always looking for possibilities for genuine improvement rather than lapsing into empty (or dangerous) gestures of condemnation. It would recognize and affirm the fact that one inevitably takes one's stand as an American.

Such a formulation recalls the ideal—put forward some two decades ago by Michael Walzer—of "connected criticism," which would acknowledge that no one has the ability to stand entirely outside his society or context, and that the ideal of the independent intellectual has to be balanced against the idea of intellect working within a cultural context for the common good. Gitlin's version of this is somewhat more robust; he is even inclined to praise patriotism as a kind of "community of mutual aid," as opposed to the sort of "symbolic displays," "catechisms," or "self-congratu-

lation" that pass for patriotism. But the qualifiers are all important. Patriotism is never a blank check, and it is always undertaken with a certain provisionality and pragmatism in mind.

His formulation has many admirable aspects. For example, there is this statement: "We are free to imagine our country any way we like, but we are not free to deny that it is our country." Or this: "It is with effort and sacrifice, not pride or praise, that citizens honor the democratic covenant." Or his superb analysis of why what is called "community" is, in practice, often nothing more than a new form of insularity: "The crucial difference here is between a community, consisting of people crucially *unlike* ourselves, and a network, or 'lifestyle enclave,' made up of people *like* ourselves. Many 'communities' in the sense commonly overused today...are actually networks, a fact that the term disguises." Precisely right.

BUT THERE ARE ALSO TROUBLING ASPECTS to Gitlin's formulations, which make one suspect that his rethinking has stopped well short of its goal. One finds far too many overtones of the past, of a patriotism that can turn on a dime and see itself as "against the nation for the nation," and as such may not have the reliability or resiliency to withstand tribulations and crises, or the power to summon the nation to great enterprises that might be costly, difficult, and lengthy. Gitlin himself places "sacrifice" at the center of "lived patriotism," and asserts that where there is no sacrifice (as, in his view, there has been none in the global war on terrorism as the Bush Administration has prosecuted it), there is no genuine patriotism.

I think he is partly on target here, but only partly, for he reduces the effect to the cause. As Ernest Renan and other theorists of nationalism have insisted, the nation is constituted in large measure by the shared *memories* of sufferings and sacrifices past, sufferings and sacrifices that make the present generation willing to endure sufferings and sacrifices of its own—not only to keep what it has, but to keep faith with those who have come before. The role of memory is crucial; that is to say, the role of history. Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address, with its invocation of the "mystic chords of memory," or the Gettysburg Address, with its gesture toward the "honored dead" as a source of inspiration and a spirit of rededication, are paradigmatic examples of such uses of the memory of suffering. We are willing to sacrifice in part because we see that the sacrifices of those who came before us have been honored, and we too wish to be honored, as they are. But what if those who came before us cease

to be honored—what then? Here Gitlin has a problem, because his view of American history is so bleak, with so few bright spots, and his contempt for the shallowness of American patriotism at present is so deep, that there hardly seems to be anything worthy of one's sacrifice to be found in either place.

Moreover, it is not sacrifice itself, but the willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the cause of the nation, that is the crucial element in the makeup of patriotism. More than once Gitlin cites his admiration for the passengers of Flight 93 on September 11, 2001, whose airborne rebellion probably saved the White House or the Capitol building from destruction. "They hadn't waited for authorities to define their patriotism for them," Gitlin remarks. "They were not satisfied with symbolic displays. It dawned on me that patriotism was the sum of such acts." Elsewhere Gitlin praises them as "activist passengers" engaging in "mutual aid."

But this is all surely wrong, and a misappropriation of the meaning of their acts. We will never know exactly what thoughts went through their minds, but one rather doubts that the question, "What would be the genuinely patriotic thing to do?" was one of them. They did not "become" patriotic by choosing terms for their death that served the cause of the nation. No, we honor them because they were willing to act on highly imperfect knowledge, in a terrifying situation very like the fog of war, except that it was inflicted suddenly on civilians minding their own business. They behaved in ways that proved their love of country; in their willingness to sacrifice for it, they acted on a patriotism that was already in them.

THERE IS MUCH TO LIKE AND EVEN admire in this book, and the fact of its appearance is encouraging. But Gitlin remains, as he always has been, a man of the Left, and no one should underestimate the depth of his contempt for almost everything and everyone right of center. The book is very much in the tradition of criticism of the Left from the Left, à la Christopher Lasch and Russell Jacoby and before them Richard Hofstadter and Reinhold Niebuhr. It is written for readers who are committed to the general positions of the Left—the tacit assumption being that only the Left has ever offered anything worth criticizing, and that the Right is concerned with little more than greed and hypocrisy and the naked exercise of conscienceless power by unaccountable elites.

And yet one is almost willing to set that aside, given the usefulness of the book's principal aim. Almost everyone, even those on the Right, ought to be able to agree with the de-

sirability of Gitlin's stated goal of a "new start for intellectual life on the left." God knows we would all benefit from the emergence of a more mature, more thoughtful, more responsible, and more constructive Left than the one we have now.

But it is harder to set aside Gitlin's unusually poisonous and quite unhinged diatribes against George W. Bush—"this lazy ne'er-do-well, this duty-shirking know-nothing who deceived and hustled his way to power," whose rise showed that "you could drink yourself into one stupor after another, for decades and...come out on top" through "a bloodless coup d'état"—words which are, alas, illustrative of the steep decline of public discourse that he otherwise decries. Gitlin lowers his book by not only lapsing into but luxuriating in such invective. He laments that "rarely does a fair, thorough, intelligible public debate take place on any significant political subject" in contemporary America. Too true. Yet it is hard to see how character assassination of the president contributes to rectifying this. Indeed, we see a growing decay today in the very idea of a loyal opposition—a much better term than "connected critic," by the way, because it contains the concept of loyalty—the maintenance of which is central to the work of a civilized democracy.

The word "loyalty" itself has, like patriotism, been reduced to one of the impermissibles of discourse, conjuring as it does images of "loyalty oaths" and other constraints upon conscience and freedom of thought and expression. But there is no enduring solidarity, large or small, without loyalty, a form of commitment that endures in and out of season, and serves to lift oneself out of oneself, and acknowledges that there are imperatives and

duties in life beyond the range of one's own desires and inclinations. No one is talking about blind loyalty, and loyalty, like all virtues, has its limits. But it is an indispensable virtue, and anyone who wants to speak compellingly about patriotism cannot afford to be mute on the subject.

GITLIN HAS NOT QUITE COME TO TERMS with the fact—though to his credit, he does not ignore it—that this country he professes to love, or seeks to find an acceptable rationale for loving, has an alarming propensity for electing to high office people of whom he does not approve. Perhaps the first step in fostering a more genuine patriotism is being willing to take such an electorate seriously, and not to dismiss its patriotism as shallow, insubstantial, and manipulable. One might also take seriously the motives behind the soldiers, sailors, and Marines that serve the nation, men and women who most certainly make sacrifices for the common good as they understand it, and deserve at least a word or two in this book.

Still, I do not want to end on a negative note. *The Intellectuals and the Flag* offers penetrating, even devastating, criticisms of the intellectual state of the Left, and of the academic world that it dominates. It is a courageous book, and, with all its faults, an honest one. One hopes that it is not this talented author's last word on the subject.

Wilfred M. McClay is SunTrust Chair of Excellence in Humanities at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is currently serving as Senior Fulbright Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Rome.



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CRISIS OF THE OLD LIBERAL ORDER



ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR., WHO died in February at the age of 89, spent 60 years being famous as an emblem and arbiter of American liberalism, though his importance waned as liberalism's did. "It's amazing, in retrospect," Nicholas Lemann wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1998, "what a long string of Presidents—from Truman all the way to Carter—felt a twinge of terror at the possibility of...incurring the disapproval of Arthur Schlesinger." Schlesinger's good opinion was tantamount, Lemann notes, to the "good opinion of the centrist-liberal establishment." His career moved from triumph to triumph during the middle third of the 20th century, when liberalism was ascendant. His second book, *The Age of Jackson*, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1946, when he was 27. As befits a man who, according to the *New York Times* obituary, frequently wrote 5,000 words a day, Schlesinger authored more than 20 books and hundreds of articles for periodicals that ranged from *Foreign Affairs* to *Ladies' Home Journal*. Before 1960 he finished three volumes of *The Age of Roosevelt*—*The Crisis of the Old Order* (1957), *The Coming of the New Deal* (1958), and *The Politics of Upheaval* (1960). (He never completed the remaining volumes, which would have covered the final eight years of Roosevelt's presidency.)

Schlesinger played a central role in founding Americans for Democratic Action in 1947, and his influential book of 1949, *The Vital Center*, remains the best expression of the ADA world-

view. He was a speechwriter for Adlai Stevenson during the 1952 and 1956 presidential campaigns, but switched to Kennedy in 1960, subsequently accepting Kennedy's offer to work in the White House as a special assistant. He left the Johnson Administration two months after Dallas, going on to win a second Pulitzer with *A Thousand Days* (1965), his history of the Kennedy presidency. He was active in Robert Kennedy's brief presidential campaign in 1968, writing a best-selling biography of RFK ten years later. The last campaign in which Schlesinger played a significant role was Ted Kennedy's attempt to wrest the Democratic nomination from Jimmy Carter in 1980. Kennedy's defeat by the more conservative Carter, and then Carter's defeat by the much more conservative Ronald Reagan, sent Schlesinger—and liberalism—into internal exile. Unlike his seven immediate predecessors in the Oval Office, "Reagan couldn't have cared less" what Schlesinger had to say, according to Lemann.

Torturing the Facts

AFTER SCHLESINGER'S DEATH, SAM Tanenhaus, the editor of the *New York Times Book Review*, lamented the loss of America's "last great public historian," who was unique for commanding "broad cultural authority." More generally, the disappearance of public intellectuals like Schlesinger was decried 20 years ago by Russell Jacoby in *The Last*

Intellectuals (1987): "Younger intellectuals no longer need or want a larger public; they are almost exclusively professors. Campuses are their homes; colleagues their audience; monographs and specialized journals their media.... Their jobs, advancement, and salaries depend on the evaluation of specialists, and this dependence affects the issues broached and the language employed."

We should be careful what we mourn for. Like two magnets turned the wrong way, the words "public intellectual" (or "popular artist") resist each other. There's a tension between engaging with public life in order to influence political outcomes, and following the evidence wherever it leads in pursuit of truth. Any combination of the two requires ruthless candor, with the public and oneself, about when one is speaking as a partisan and when as a truth-seeker. Throughout his long career, Arthur Schlesinger was not, to put it gently, zealous about fulfilling this duty. There was such perfect congruence between Schlesinger's political preferences and his scholarly conclusions that neither happy coincidence nor honest error can possibly account for it. In the devastating *Coolidge and the Historians* (1982), Thomas Silver showed that Schlesinger repeatedly and flagrantly tortured the evidence until it confessed. "What the hell," Schlesinger said in defense of one book. "You have to call them as you see them." It's the umpire's credo—but Schlesinger always wanted to have it both ways, to speak

with the authority of an umpire, while competing fiercely as a member of his team.

The Vapid Center

HE SPENT HIS LIFE PROMOTING liberalism. The fact that, in the end, his brief for it was neither clear nor compelling says more about liberalism's deficiencies than Schlesinger's. All of his histories served polemical purposes; it was said that on every page of *The Age of Jackson* the author voted for Franklin Roosevelt. *The Vital Center*, however, is Schlesinger's most important book that presents itself as a polemic. The political center he defended lay somewhere between the reactionary, plutocratic businessmen who had opposed the New Deal, and the Henry Wallace progressives who in 1948 believed that the overriding imperative of American foreign policy must be, in all questions, to give Stalin the benefit of the doubt. The liberalism (or radicalism—*The Vital Center* used the terms interchangeably) situated on that political real estate had qualities: influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr's theology, Schlesinger was especially concerned to portray a sober political disposition that was wary about the human capacity for evil, rather than a sentimental creed, optimistic about uplifting human nature through social reform.

What Schlesinger's liberalism did not have was an essence. *The Vital Center* goes on about all the things government might do, and all the corresponding difficulties it needs to keep in mind when trying them. What, then, does the revival of American radicalism entail? "The recipe for retaining liberty is not doing everything in one fine logical sweep, but muddling through...." In later years Schlesinger favored the phrase "affirmative government," which elevated "muddling through" without clarifying it. The only principle "affirmative government" ever clearly affirmed was the need for more government.

E.J. Dionne eulogized Schlesinger in a column, reassuring his readers that "reports of liberalism's death are always premature," because the commitment to problem-solving—"the search for remedy," in Schlesinger's phrase—is "the antidote to social indifference and to despair about our capacity to act in common through government." As ideologies go, problem-solving is better than problem-causing. It is, however, a framework that defeats every effort to make distinctions and draw boundaries. There is never any basis in the doctrine of muddling through for saying the government lacks the capacity, wisdom, or legitimate authority to solve a particular problem, or even that some "problems" are really aspects of the human condition that we might ameliorate but cannot

eliminate. Incapable of discovering a single dissatisfaction that is not a problem the government might—hence must—solve, the search for remedy easily becomes the search for new afflictions in need of remedy.

The meagerness and uselessness of the "principle" of affirmative government reminds us why the center is rarely vital: there is so little -ism in centrism. In practice, centrism amounts to split-the-difference-ism, which renders muddling through indistinguishable from messing around. The other problem with muddling through as a philosophy of government is that, devoid of any guideposts, benchmarks, or precepts, its practical success is utterly dependent on the quality of the muddlers. The need for capable public officials, however, cannot explain or justify the arrogance that so frequently mars Schlesinger's writing. Schlesinger did not limit himself to being snide to people who disagreed with him. He had no important policy differences with Harry Truman, for example, but the unprepossessing, accidental president lacked FDR's pedigree and polish, reason enough for Schlesinger to call Truman "a man of mediocre and limited capacity" who had "managed to surround himself with his intellectual equals." In print continuously over seven prolific decades, Schlesinger never had an unpublished sneer.

Old Liberalism and the New Politics

ACCORDING TO FRED SIEGEL, THE "political and cultural snobbery that informs *The Vital Center*" lives on in the hauteur of those "who expect, given their putative expertise, to be obeyed"—and this attitude has proven to be "the undoing of American liberalism." In view of its intellectual and political preeminence during the middle third of the 20th century, it's still astounding that liberalism's undoing took so little doing, that it broke apart in the 1960s and has stayed broken for 40 years. Vietnam, assassinations, and ghetto riots explain only so much of this collapse. The self-assured liberalism that Schlesinger insisted on, the liberalism that shaped the New Frontier and vanquished Barry Goldwater in 1964, turned out to be a flimsy vessel, unseaworthy except in calm waters and mild breezes.

This liberalism was for the people, but not quite of or by them. It preferred them to be objects of an affirmative government directed by their betters rather than agents of an affirmative government able to challenge their betters. It's one thing to favor a bad policy, as liberals did in the controversy over busing in the 1970s. It's something else to castigate all opponents of busing as racists, and deny even the possibility that decent, intelligent people might have le-

gitimate misgivings about that dubious policy. This "punitive, ram-it-down-their throats quality," in Nicholas Lemann's phrase, belonged to a politics that antagonized people *on purpose*, because they were deemed to have it coming.

This protean ideology, furthermore, was perfectly suited to repulse the intrusions of mere citizens who didn't know their place. Muddling-through liberalism might mean lots of things, so there was no way to know if any particular rendering got it right. But the nomenklatura empowered by liberalism had self-interest combined with self-righteousness on their side when heaping abuse on those who got it wrong.

"I remain to this day a New Dealer, unreconstructed and unrepentant," Schlesinger wrote in his memoirs, *A Life in the Twentieth Century*, published in 2000. His faith did waver, momentarily, during and after the storms of the 1960s. "With all its faults, the old liberalism had at least arrayed itself against the immovable and impenetrable institutions," he said in his 1978 biography of Robert Kennedy. "Yet the old liberalism had failed to beat the structures.... In different ways, welfare, public housing, farm price supports, one creation after another of the old liberalism, had congealed into props of the existing order."

The practitioners of the old liberalism thought America had problems to be solved. They were confident that public-spirited young men, trained by the best colleges and holding their idealism in nice equipoise with their irony, could solve them. The advocates of the "New Politics," who challenged that liberalism, thought America had sins to be expiated. The enormity of the sins, the suffering of those who had been sinned against, and the spiritually hollow lives of the sins' beneficiaries, all meant that the smug complacency of the old liberals had to be replaced by frantic moral urgency. Robert Kennedy ultimately sided with the New Politics. Schlesinger records that in 1967 Kennedy told an audience of students, "Don't you understand that what we are doing to the Vietnamese is not very different than what Hitler did to the Jews?"

Schlesinger's own rhetoric soon became equally injudicious. In 1968 he gave a commencement address the day after Kennedy was shot, calling Americans "the most frightening people on this planet...because the atrocities we commit trouble so little our official self-righteousness, our invincible conviction of our moral infallibility." He informed the graduates and their proud parents that Americans could begin to atone for their wickedness only by recognizing "that the evil is in us, that it springs from some dark, intolerable tension in our history and our institutions."

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Schlesinger actively supported George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign. The McGovern Democrats came to a fork in the road between the old liberalism and the New Politics—and took it. That year's Democratic platform wrapped gauzy rhetoric about authenticity and participatory democracy around expensive promises to every interest group that could fit under the party's tent. Tom Geoghegan, reporting for the *New Republic* from Miami's Democratic convention, observed that the party was caught between two worlds. In one, "politics is expected to deal with the whole man and his sense of helplessness." In the other, "a faceless bureaucracy indemnifies anyone or any group big enough to make trouble for it." In short, "Government has failed—give us more government."

"Neoliberal Nonsense"

REALIZING THE MCGOVERN SYNTHESIS was untenable—Americans were never going to elect these smug Jeremiahs decrying Americans' depravity—some of the brightest survivors of McGovernism began to entertain surprisingly skeptical thoughts about the old liberal imperative to give us more government. McGovern's campaign manager, Gary Hart, was elected to the Senate from Colorado, and promptly declared that the "class of '74" Democrats were not "a bunch of little Hubert Humphreys." He later explained that he meant that those Democrats "were not automatic regulators, new-agency creators, and higher-tax-and-spend people."

This political impulse eventually acquired a name, neoliberalism, and a magazine, the *Washington Monthly*. In "A Neoliberal's Manifesto," the *Monthly's* editor, Charles Peters, decried the "shortage of self-criticism among liberals." The neoliberals, he said in his 1983 article, "are against a fat, sloppy, and smug bureaucracy. We want a government that can fire people who can't or won't do the job." He called for means-testing all government transfer programs, including veterans' benefits and Social Security. Finally, Peters declared, "the snobbery that is most damaging to liberalism is the liberal intellectuals' contempt for religious, patriotic, and family values." This contempt is "the least appealing trait of the liberal intellectuals," many of whom "don't really believe in democracy."

On cue, Arthur Schlesinger promptly wrote a book review expressing his contempt—for the neoliberal heretics. He allowed that they had "useful points to make," but "neoliberalism was a hoax from the start," one whose "anti-government line" was "a bow to fashion and a bid for publicity." He called on all liberals to

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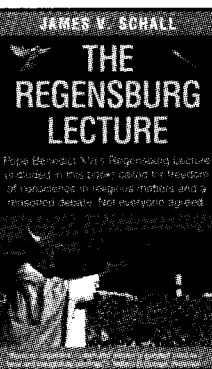
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re-embrace the one, true faith in affirmative government, and for "the end of the neoliberal nonsense."

It's now clear that the neoliberal nonsense *has* ended. Neoliberalism failed for two related reasons: first, the imperative to "give us more government" was stronger than any concern about whether government could really solve the problems of those who needed help. Second, this policy imperative meant that self-criticism must yield to the political imperative to fight the real enemy: conservatism.

The upshot, in the words of Mickey Kaus, is the belief that "Democrats shouldn't spend much time questioning their traditional positions or their institutional allies because that prevents them from being as aggressively and nastily partisan as possible." While the "Neoliberal Manifesto" lamented liberals' "unwillingness to acknowledge that there just might

be some merit in the other side's position," the current editor of the *Washington Monthly*, Paul Glastris, is more interested in "figuring out how...to fight against [conservatism] than in getting into pissing matches with my friends on the left over whether federal job retraining programs are a false god." Charlie Peters believed that transfer payments to "my aunt who uses her Social Security check to go to Europe" were unaffordable and indefensible. Glastris is "definitely" opposed to means-testing.

In the crucial respect, neoliberalism and Schlesinger's vital center failed for the same reason: each tried to remove a "flaw" that proved to be intrinsic to liberalism. The vital center aspired to sobriety about human nature, caution about the possible achievements of social reform, vigilance against freedom's enemies. In all these ways it proved to be irreconcilable with liberals' instinctive belief that humans are fun-

damentally good and fraternal; that war, poverty, and discrimination persist only because of social structures that serve invidious or pathological ends. It was the gravitational pull of this instinct that led Schlesinger the centrist to embrace Robert Kennedy's view that a war begun "to assure the survival and the success of liberty," in the words of John Kennedy's inaugural address, had become morally indistinguishable from the Holocaust.

With every passing year, the vital center grows less vital and less central. Like Arthur Schlesinger's own career as a public intellectual, it is an artifact of a receding era. He leaves behind a mountain of readable but tendentious books and articles, all of them advocating a liberalism that retains the ability to buy votes but not to change minds.

William Voegeli is a fellow of the Claremont Institute.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER ON CALVIN COOLIDGE

By Thomas B. Silver

Editor's Note: Thomas B. Silver (1947–2001) was president of the Claremont Institute and the publisher of the Claremont Review of Books. The following is excerpted from his book, Coolidge and the Historians (1982).

PERHAPS THE MOST MEMORABLE HISTORICAL sketch of Calvin Coolidge is to be found in *The Crisis of the Old Order*, the first volume in Professor Schlesinger's *Age of Roosevelt*. Coolidge is interesting to Professor Schlesinger, we believe, less in himself than as a symbol of American conservatism more generally. Schlesinger understands 20th-century American conservatism as rigid ideological opposition to the moderate and pragmatic tradition of liberal reform in America....

Moreover, the conservative ideology reflects the mentality of a class, the possessing class in America. Schlesinger deplores the acquisitive character of American conservatism and its tendency to promote the interests of businessmen and the rich at the expense of the common good. These two themes—the curse of ideology and the curse of acquisitiveness—are vividly personified in *The Crisis of the Old Order* in the characterizations of Herbert Hoover and Calvin Coolidge, the spokesmen for an idea whose

time had gone. In Schlesinger's view, Hoover was a tragic figure in American conservatism and Coolidge a comic one. Hoover was, or became, an ideologue, who did not sufficiently understand that all ideas must be scrutinized regularly to see whether they have outlived their usefulness....

This was the trauma and the tragedy of Herbert Hoover, a man of high ideals, flawed by his self-righteousness and cast down by events. The tragic figure of Hoover contrasts with the comic figure of Calvin Coolidge, the smugly self-righteous little man of low ideals. Coolidge transformed the dollar into the Almighty Dollar and worshipped unceasingly at its altar.

His speeches offered his social philosophy in dry pellets of aphorism. "The chief business of the American people," he said, "is business." But, for Coolidge, business was more than business; it was a religion; and to it he committed all the passion of his arid nature.... (Schlesinger, *Crisis of the Old Order*, p. 57)

"The chief business of the American people is business." What more needs be said?

Getting a Word in Edgewise

PERHAPS THE FIRST THING THAT NEEDS to be said is that this aphorism, much ridiculed and much maligned, is the precise truth. America is a commercial republic. Now, just as fifty years ago, the principal activity of the American people is business. That is *not* to say—and Coolidge never said—that business is the highest activity in America, or that it is pursued for its own sake, or that it will automatically secure for us the good life. Coolidge seems to be Coolidge the Philistine only because...Schlesinger will not let him get a word in edgewise.

After all, the chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and prospering in the world. I am strongly of the opinion that the great majority of the people will always find these are moving impulses of our life.... Wealth is the product of industry, ambition, character and untiring effort. In all experience, the accumulation of wealth means the multiplication of schools, the increase of knowledge,



the dissemination of intelligence, the encouragement of science, the broadening of outlook, the expansion of liberties, the widening of culture. Of course, *the accumulation of wealth cannot be justified as the chief end of our existence*. But we are compelled to recognize it as a means to well-nigh every desirable achievement. So long as wealth is made the means and not the end, we need not greatly fear it. [Silver's italics.] (Calvin Coolidge, *Foundations of the Republic*, pp. 187–188)

Coolidge's attitude toward money-making and wealth is the commonsensical one, namely, that wealth is justified only as a means to higher ends. Without wealth you will not have hospitals, schools, and museums. William Allen White [a critical Coolidge biographer whom Schlesinger follows] would have us believe that Coolidge thought justice "in some occult way" would be "secreted" from the activity of the peddler and the captain of industry. This is false. Coolidge's clear position was that wealth cannot be accumulated or preserved, in the long run, outside of a framework provided by liberal culture and the more mundane virtues, e.g., "the homely fundamental virtue," of economy. Culture and virtue produce wealth, wealth does not produce them. Wealth is merely a necessary, not a sufficient, condition of progress. But wealth does provide, in its turn, the leisure and the wherewithal to pursue, for instance, a liberal education, which is among the noblest ends of man....

Things of the Spirit Come First

FAR FROM EXALTING THE IDEALS OF THE captain of industry, Coolidge again and again lamented that America was "falling away from this ideal" of a liberal education.

Great captains of industry who have aroused the wonder of the world by their financial success would not have been

captains at all had it not been for the generations of liberal culture in the past and the existence all about them of a society permeated, inspired, and led by the liberal culture of the present. If it were possible to strike out that factor from present existence, he would find all the value of his great possessions diminish to the vanishing point, and he himself would be but a barbarian among barbarians. (Coolidge, *America's Need for Education*, p. 35)

The blessings of a free republic, including the promotion of literature and the arts,

are not to be inquired of for gain or profit, though without them all gain and all profit would pass away. They will not be found in the teachings devoted exclusively to commercialism, though without them commerce would not exist. These are the higher things of life. Their teaching has come to us from the classics. If they are to be maintained they will find their support in the institutions of the liberal arts. When we are drawing away from them we are drawing away from the path of security and progress. (*Ibid.*)

Will the progress of mankind be "secreted" from the activity of the peddler? The following is the peroration of Coolidge's speech on the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence:

We live in an age of science and of abounding accumulation of material things. These did not create our Declaration. Our Declaration created them. The things of the spirit come first. Unless we cling to that, all our national prosperity, overwhelming though it may appear, will turn to a barren sceptre in our grasp. If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded

as the fathers who created it. We must not sink into a pagan materialism. We must cultivate the reverence they had for the things that are holy. (Coolidge, *Foundations*, p. 454)

These are passages that have not found their way into the history books....

The Incarnation of Ideology

THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER PROFESSOR Schlesinger has inveighed against the intrusion of ideology into the political consciousness. Ideology, he contends, is unfaithful to the richness and diversity of the political phenomena. But what is Mr. Schlesinger himself if not the incarnation of ideology? American conservatism, he tells us again and again, is typically animated by selfish, short-sighted, anti-social greed. American history is the continuing struggle between the plutocrats—the forces of darkness—and the people.

To the non-ideologue it is unclear at first how Calvin Coolidge would fit into such a cramped interpretation. Whatever the ultimate merits of his political opinions and policies, Coolidge was a decent and dignified man, as learned as any president since, intensely patriotic, and possessed of a profoundly democratic soul. The people elected him to office every time save one that he presented himself for their judgment. The people elected him president by an enormous majority.

But if the man does not readily fit into a cast-iron interpretation of American history, he certainly will after Procrustes is through with him. A bit of chopping, a bit of stretching, and Coolidge appears as a mean little philistine, a high priest of the golden calf, a willing tool of the plutocracy, a whirling dervish of business, a bleak fanatic, arid, smug, self-centered and self-satisfied, irascible and nasty.

Such is the craftsmanship of the prize-winning historian.

THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF AMERICAN ORATORY

American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War,
edited by Ted Widmer. Library of America, 810 pages, \$35

American Speeches: Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton,
edited by Ted Widmer. Library of America, 872 pages, \$35

“TO KEEP SILENT IS THE MOST USEFUL service that a mediocre talker can render to the public.” So says Tocqueville in his chapter “On Parliamentary Eloquence in the United States.” Unfortunately, democratic assemblies encourage the mediocre to sound off—often and at length. There are no back-benchers in the American political system. The result of this universal striving for something to say is not *eloquentia perfecta* but bombast. Tocqueville explains that when Americans talk about matters within the small circuit of their daily lives their speech is simple, direct, and dull. When they are forced out of their accustomed range, however, as public figures are, they have nothing to latch onto but glittering generalities. Tocqueville says of democratic man: “He has only very particular and very clear ideas, or very general and very vague notions; the intermediate space is empty.”

Anthony Trollope, who like Tocqueville wrote a two-volume account of his visit to the United States, noted the same phenomenon of the bombastic blowhard:

He was master of that wonderful fluency which is peculiarly the gift of an American. He went on from one sentence to another with rhythmic tones and unerring pronunciation. He never faltered, never repeated his words, never fell into those vile half-muttered hems and haws by which an Englishman in such a position so generally betrays his timidity. But during the whole time of my remaining in the room he did not give expression to a single thought. He went on from one soft platitude to another, and uttered words from which I would defy any one of his audience to carry away with them anything. And yet it seemed to me that his audience was satisfied.

While Trollope is disgusted by this spectacle, Tocqueville regards the tolerance that Ameri-

cans show toward bad speechifying as a mark of their democratic sophistication. They accept these verbal parades as an evil inseparable from the good of representative government.

Moreover, for Tocqueville, the flip side of the democratic vice of bloviation is genuine oratorical virtue: “I see nothing more admirable or more powerful than a great orator discussing great affairs within a democratic assembly.” Tocqueville explains how the democratic proclivity for general notions can enlarge and elevate rhetoric. Such speeches can appeal even beyond national borders: “from the first debates that took place in the little colonial assemblies of America in the period of the Revolution, Europe was moved.” Democratic orators, relying on “verities drawn from human nature,” speak to all mankind.

American Speeches, a two-volume collection from the Library of America, very successfully winnows out the petty and the dry, and mostly winnows out the pretentious and pompous, leaving a selection of mighty speeches on the twin themes of liberty and equality. Most of the names one would expect are here, along with some lesser known worthies. Those garnering the most selections are Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt with eight apiece, Martin Luther King, Jr., with six, and John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan with five each. In both volumes there is a mix of elected officials and what might be called outside agitators—individuals who seek to reach public opinion directly through moral suasion rather than indirectly through the medium of law and legislation. In both volumes, the agitators are usually, but not uniformly, women and blacks. Volume I has Frances Wright, Angelina Grimké Weld, Henry Highland Garnet, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass, along with the radical abolitionists Wendell Phillips and John Brown. Volume II has Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ida B. Wells, Booker T. Washington, Mary Church Terrell, Carrie Chapman Catt, Betty Friedan, Malcolm

X (the only speaker to address “enemies” as well as friends), and Martin Luther King, Jr., along with the radical socialist Eugene V. Debs and free speech activist Mario Savio.

EACH VOLUME ALSO HAS ONE SPEECH BY a Native American. These are painful pieces to read. Although the movements for political inclusion by blacks and women involved suffering and tragedy, they were ultimately successful. By contrast, the Native American struggle was never about inclusion. It was an encounter between incompatible ways of life. In addressing “the Chief Warrior of the United States” (George Washington), the Seneca leader Red Jacket pleads:

We wish to see your words [of peace] verified to our children, and children’s children. You enjoy all the blessings of this life; to you, therefore, we look to make provision that the same may be enjoyed by our children. This wish comes from our heart; but we add that our happiness cannot be great if in the introduction of your ways we are put under too much constraint.

Despite the efforts of Washington and other American statesmen to set our relations with the Indians upon a foundation of justice, in less than a century, the Nez Percé leader Chief Joseph speaks these words of surrender:

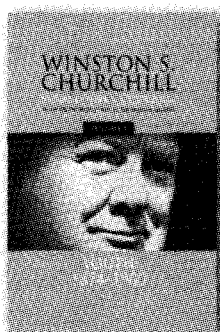
He who led on the young men is dead. It is cold, and we have no blankets; the little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are—perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired; my heart is sick and

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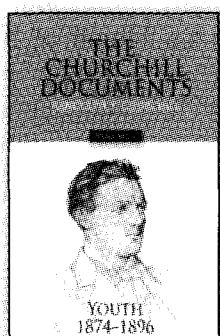
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sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.

Since Cain and Abel, farmers and nomads have been at odds. Coexistence is not possible and the land-hungry farmers who build fences almost always conquer or kill the unsettled and uncivilized, be they shepherds or hunters. Tocqueville, who witnessed the spreading destruction, regarded the extinction of the Indian peoples as inevitable and inexpressibly sad.

Despite occupying only seven of 1,682 pages, these two speeches capture something essential about that extra-constitutional, indeed pre-constitutional conflict. The nation's other "irrepressible conflict" (the phrase is William Seward's from an 1858 speech) provoked a constitutional crisis. Because the institution of African slavery raised fundamental questions about the national self-understanding, it looms much larger in the collective conscience and in the pages of these volumes, confirming Frederick Douglass's claim that "the destiny of the nation has the Negro for its pivot, and turns upon the question as to what shall be done with him." The issue of slavery absolutely dominates the first volume; the problem of the color-line is prominent in the second volume, though not quite to the same degree, testimony perhaps to the nation's confirmed trajectory towards equality. Thus, we move from the crisis over slavery to the controversy over civil rights and finally to the platitudes of political correctness. The last speech in this collection is Clinton's commemoration of the Little Rock Nine on the 40th anniversary of the desegregation of Central High. While the speech is (as a blurb on the inside flap helpfully says) "a heartfelt tribute," it certainly did not require any moral courage to draft and deliver, unlike, say, Lincoln's House Divided speech or King's Montgomery speech. Although Clinton hinted at a particularly insidious version of lingering race prejudice ("We must not replace the tyranny of segregation with the tragedy of low expectations"), he resolutely refused to examine the connection between this characteristically liberal condescension (which fails to recognize itself as bigotry) and paternalistic policies like affirmative action and racial set-asides. The speech is a disappointing close to the two volumes. Pabulum does not sustain progress.

ASTONISHINGLY, ALTHOUGH THESE volumes were published in 2006, they take no account of September 11 or the war on terrorism. The first volume is subtitled: *Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War*. It opens with James Otis in 1761 and closes with Lincoln's Second Inaugural in 1865. The second volume is subtitled: *Political Oratory*

from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton (not William Jefferson Clinton, mind you, but "Bill"). It opens with Lincoln's speech on Reconstruction given just four days before his death and closes with the Little Rock commemoration in 1997. I suppose one could justify an editorial decision to end the volume there for thematic or even chronological reasons (closing out the millennium), but it can't help seeming blatantly and inexcusably partisan—refusing to acknowledge September 11 so as not to have to include President Bush's remarks at the National Cathedral on September 14th (the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance), or his remarks to Congress on September 20th, or his 2002 State of the Union address (the "axis of evil" speech). If the editor didn't want to entitle the second volume *Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to George W. Bush*, alternatives could have been found: *Political Oratory from Reconstruction to the War on Terrorism* or better just *Political Oratory from Reconstruction to September 11* (better because the outcome of the war is in doubt, while the catalyzing event and its significance are not). It comes as no surprise to learn that the editor, Ted Widmer, was a Clinton speechwriter. I can sympathize with the temptation to plump for one's boss and oneself (isn't *Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Bill Clinton* another way of saying *Political Oratory from Abraham Lincoln to Ted Widmer?*), but the editors of the Library of America should not have allowed such transparent egocentrism and partisanship.

Aside from Bill and Ted's excellent adventure, there are a handful of other questionable choices. There are two powerful anti-Vietnam speeches, both from King, but there is no speech setting forth the rationale for our involvement; the most likely candidate would be Nixon's "silent majority" speech of November 3, 1969. (Incidentally, Nixon does have two entries, his Checkers speech and his remarks to his staff on leaving the White House—both startlingly self-revelatory.) While there are seven Democratic National Convention speeches, there is only one Republican National Convention speech (Goldwater's in 1964). Even then, the second volume does not include the likeliest Democratic choices, such as Barbara Jordan's 1976 speech. Instead, we are given Jordan's remarks to the House Judiciary Committee during the Nixon impeachment proceedings. But there is no equivalent speech from Clinton's impeachment, say from Henry Hyde. And finally, there is nothing on the culture wars (no reference whatever to the controversy over abortion or the "naked public square"). A good choice would have been Reagan's March 8, 1983, speech to the National Association of Evangelicals.

JUXTAPOSING THE TWO VOLUMES REVEALS striking changes in the locus and character of American political rhetoric. The cover art epitomizes the shift. Volume I has a painting of a robed Patrick Henry declaiming before the Virginia House of Burgesses. It is clear he is speaking to a body of distinguished equals, men who will have their own thoughts on the matter at hand, and one suspects, rather high standards for persuasive speech. The second volume has a photo of President Kennedy speaking in front of three microphones to an undepicted, but one assumes mass, audience. In the first volume there are only seven speeches by sitting presidents, including three from Lincoln. In the second volume, there are 34. Even more telling is that from the Revolution through World War I, there are 19 congressional floor speeches, mostly by senators. After Henry Cabot Lodge's speech in opposition to the League of Nations, there is not a single floor speech (though there are two brief statements made in committee). Oratory and Congress have declined in tandem. The erudite Lodge was the last to employ extensive Latin in a speech; there is one simple Latin phrase in Kennedy's "ich bin ein Berliner" speech, but nothing like the full sentences from men steeped in literature and history.

The only compensation for the decline is that as the speeches get worse, they mostly get shorter. When all you have are bullet-points, your ammunition is pretty quickly spent. Modern presidential speeches are composed of dry, detailed lists of promised programs sandwiched between warmed-over boilerplate. It's the very combination that Tocqueville predicted: the boring particulars and the vapid generalizations; "the intermediate space is empty." The richness of earlier rhetoric, particularly in the Senate, is on display in the great triumvirate of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. Volume I contains the speech each made in the Senate on the Compromise of 1850. Clay's speech alone is 67 pages long and must have taken at least six hours to deliver. This is not filibustering where a senator reads aloud names from the phone book. This is closely reasoned argumentation on the constitutional powers of the federal government with respect to slavery. Seeing the length of these speeches, I intended to skim them but couldn't. They were gripping precisely because they made demands on the listener.

AMORE CONCENTRATED EXHILARATION is experienced in reading Lincoln's speeches. Lincoln managed to accomplish his aims in dramatically shorter compass while speaking to a broad audience. You know you're in the presence of sustained dialectics because the paragraphs can't be reshuffled with-

out loss of meaning. By contrast, there is no logical sequence in the following all-too-typical passage from Lyndon Johnson:

I want to be the President who educated young children to the wonders of their world. I want to be the President who helped to feed the hungry and to prepare them to be taxpayers instead of taxeaters.

I want to be the President who helped the poor to find their own way and who protected the right of every citizen to vote in every election.

I want to be the President who helped to end hatred among his fellow men and who promoted love among the people of all races and all regions and all parties.

I want to be the President who helped to end war among the brothers of this earth.

You could play pick-up-sticks with that collection of indistinguishable banalities. Ordered thought has a different structure. Listen to just the opening phrases of successive paragraphs from Lincoln's First Inaugural:

I hold, that in contemplation of universal law,

Again, if the United States be not a government proper,

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition

But if the destruction of the Union,

It follows from these views that no State,

I therefore consider that,

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence;

Hierarchy may be antithetical to democracy, but it is essential to logic. The replacement of paragraphs with bullet-points indicates the democratization or leveling or atomization of logic. The equality of all sentences destroys the connectedness of thought. This scattershot technique of contemporary speechmaking can bowl you over, if the speaker has sufficient force of personality, but it can't pierce your mind or heart, and it certainly can't do it as written rather than spoken. Like Shakespeare's plays, Lincoln's speeches are as powerful in the study as on the stage.

So it is fitting that Lincoln is the fulcrum of these volumes. The first volume culminates in him; the second volume begins with him and is filled with subsequent references to him by both Democrats and Republicans who, unfortunately, invoke his memory more than they imitate his mode of analysis and presentation. Of the invocations, the most interesting is Oppenheimer's

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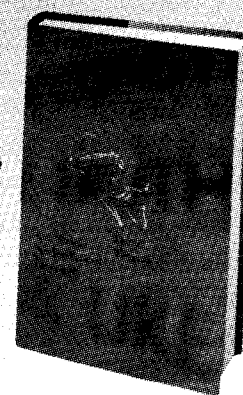
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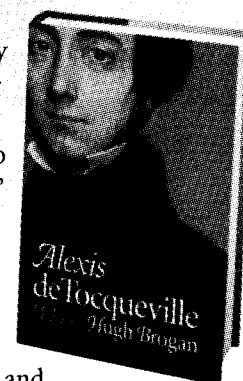
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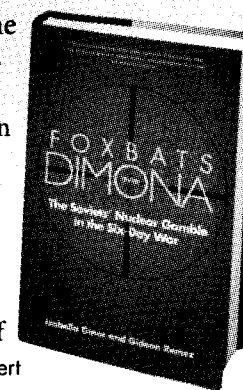


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1945 "Speech to the Association of Los Alamos Scientists" comparing the evil of slavery to the new evil of atomic weapons and suggesting a Lincolnian (rather than abolitionist) strategy to address the problem of nuclear proliferation. Oppenheimer remarks how Lincoln saw "that beyond the issue of slavery was the issue of the community of the people of the country, and the issue of the Union."

THE MULTILAYERED, COMPREHENSIVE vision of Lincoln is on display through the juxtaposing of Lincoln's carefully calibrated House Divided speech with Seward's more extreme and simplistic "Irrepressible Conflict" speech and again through the juxtaposing of Lincoln's generous (and even delicately humorous) "Speech on Reconstruction" with Thaddeus Stevens's violently anti-Southern "Speech in Congress on Reconstruction." Lincoln demonstrated what "charity for all" meant when he said:

We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union; and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe it is not only possible, but in fact, easier, to do this, without deciding, or even considering, whether these states have even been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these states and the Union; and each forever after, innocently indulge his own opinion whether, in doing the acts, he brought the States from without, into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it.

Stevens, by contrast, insists that the former rebel States are either out of the Union, in the same situation as a defeated foreign belligerent, or "dead carcasses lying within the Union" having "no more existence than the revolted cities of Latium, two thirds of whose people were colonized and their property confiscated, and their right of citizenship withdrawn by conquering and avenging Rome." In either case, Stevens recommends rigorous rehabilitation: "As there are no symptoms that the people of these provinces will be prepared to participate in constitutional government for some years, I know of no arrangement so proper for them as territorial governments. There they can learn the principles of freedom and eat the fruit of foul rebellion."

Although invocations of Lincoln are standard, only Frederick Douglass in his 1876 "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," reaches beyond reverence and acknowledgment to a critical consideration of Lincoln's statesmanship. His address is a deeply insightful and appreciative (but far from fawning) account of Lincoln's relation to African-Americans. Douglass was a radical who understood and respected the intransigent moderation of Lincoln. Douglass sums up the paradoxical combination of restraint and resolve in Lincoln's policy, and the underlying reasons for it:

Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined.

IN THE SECOND VOLUME, THE LECTURE platform addresses, like Douglass's, are in general less commonplace and more refreshingly idiosyncratic than those by elected figures. One of the most interesting is a speech by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, appearing before the Judiciary Committee in 1892 on behalf of the women's suffrage amendment (then slated to be the 16th; when finally approved, the 19th). Rather than rehash her case (after 20 years of such appearances, "all the arguments...are familiar to all you gentlemen"), she instead draws out the basic attitude toward life implicit in feminism. Her talk is accurately entitled "The Solitude of Self," and it is unflinchingly grim. The adjectives she attaches to this solitude are "immeasurable," "awful," "bitter," and "solemn." Human beings live in radical isolation from one another:

We ask no sympathy from others in the anxiety and agony of a broken friendship or shattered love. When death sunders our nearest ties, alone we sit in the shadows of our affliction. Alike mid the greatest triumphs and darkest tragedies of life we walk alone. On the divine heights of human attainments, eulogized and worshiped as a hero or saint, we stand alone. In ignorance, poverty, and vice, as a pauper or criminal, alone we starve or steal; ... Seeing then that life must ever be a march and a battle, that each soldier must be equipped for his own protection, it is the height of cruelty to rob the individual of a single natural right.

Women require full opportunities for individual development to enable them to face (or

even better to outface) the horrors of existence. There is some truth in her existential Hobbesianism, but not the whole truth. She misses the better half of truth, and no more so than when she speaks of motherhood:

Whatever the theories may be of woman's dependence on man, in the supreme moments of her life he can not bear her burdens. Alone she goes to the gates of death to give life to every man that is born into the world. No one can share her fears, no one can mitigate her pangs; and if her sorrow is greater than she can bear, alone she passes beyond the gates into the vast unknown.

Whether or not man can bear (or at least lighten) woman's burdens, the fact that *she bears him* is testament to the naturalness of human connection—connection that Stanton denies. She declares the relations of mother, wife, sister, and daughter to be "incidental" and points out that "a large class of women may never assume" some of these relations. She's right that not all women become mothers, wives, or sisters, but each and every woman is a daughter, as each and every man is a son—even if abandoned or orphaned. The generational link is inescapable and constitutive of our humanity. It is strange indeed when mothers, who have nursed mewling and puking infants, speak of human self-sovereignty.

Interestingly, Teddy Roosevelt's famous talk on "The Strenuous Life" overlaps with Stanton in certain fundamentals, especially the emphasis on "those virile qualities necessary to win [or for Stanton, to endure] in the stern strife of actual life." T.R., though, wants female hardiness to be directed towards traditional (i.e., natural) female pursuits. Accordingly, his version of human striving has room for shared struggle and joint action:

The woman must be the housewife, the helpmeet of the homemaker, the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children. In one of Daudet's powerful and melancholy books he speaks of "the fear of maternity, the haunting terror of the young wife of the present day." When such words can be truthfully written of a nation, the nation is rotten to the heart's core. When men fear work or fear righteous war, when women fear motherhood, they tremble on the brink of doom; and well it is that they should vanish from the earth, where they are fit subjects for the scorn of all men and women who are themselves strong and brave and high-minded.

Whatever one thinks of Stanton and Roosevelt, their words are their own, bodying forth their inner convictions. Two speeches that seem to offer even more unmediated expressions of self are Sojourner Truth's wondrous 1851 "Speech to Woman's Rights Convention" and George S. Patton's vulgarity-laced "Speech to Third Army Troops." About the middle of the 20th century, despite all the trumpeting of individualism, the individuality of speech seems to lessen. One begins to sense the homogenizing effects of writing by committee. Of course, from the nation's beginnings, public figures have had the benefit of apprentices and editors. Washington asked Hamilton to prepare a draft of his Farewell Address (an address which is not included here since it was published rather than delivered—leading one to wonder how complete a national picture can be gained from the spoken word); Lincoln had Seward's assistance on his First Inaugural; and Benjamin Franklin suggested key changes in Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence. Nonetheless, speechwriting was not the group-work guild that it is now. Just as the great floor speeches vanish post-World War I, so too apparently do the Lyceum-type speeches. I suspect, however, that one could discover impressive performances at newer venues, such as think tanks and similar associations. There is still an active—though more ideologically fractured—lecture circuit.

THE FRACTURING OF PUBLIC SPEECH is seen in the increasing distance between the partisans of liberty and the partisans of equality, crystallized particularly in presidential and would-be presidential rhetoric. Goldwater's 1964 "Speech to the Republican National Convention" is a paean to freedom: "And this party, with its every action, every word, every breath and every heart beat, has but a single resolve, and that is freedom." Reagan's speeches follow the path cut by Goldwater, defending freedom against centralization at home and tyranny abroad. Equality finds its spokesmen in Johnson, the Kennedys (Robert and Edward, who are both here, more than John), and Jesse Jackson. Johnson's 1965 "Address at Howard University" is the most forthright in that he actually downplays freedom's part in justice:

That beginning is freedom; and the barriers to that freedom are tumbling down.... But freedom is not enough.... We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.... To this end equal opportunity is essential, but not enough, not

enough.... The Negro, like these others [American minorities], will have to rely mostly upon his own efforts. But he just can not do it alone.

Tocqueville worried that democratic man would be inclined to sacrifice liberty in the quest for ever greater equality of condition. For Americans, the danger of democratic despotism is peculiarly aggravated when the subject is racial equality. Where race is involved, we are sorely tempted to jettison our principles. For centuries this country refused to acknowledge and protect the equality of rights. Once the nation determined to make amends, instead of simply ensuring equal rights and non-discrimination, we went searching for more expedient routes by which to expiate our national sins. In 1865, a full century before Johnson's Great Society programs, Frederick Douglass warned against such well-intentioned projects:

In regard to the colored people there is always more that is benevolent, I perceive, than just, manifested towards us. What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply *justice*. The American people have always been anxious to know what they shall do with us.... I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us! If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm-eaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! ... And if the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a

chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! If you see him on his way to school, let him alone, don't disturb him! If you see him going to the dinner-table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot-box, let him alone, don't disturb him! If you see him going into a work-shop, just let him alone,—your interference is doing him a positive injury. Gen. Banks' "preparation" is of a piece with this attempt to prop up the Negro. Let him fall if he cannot stand alone!

The task of government is to assure that schools and hotels, ballot-boxes and workshops, are accessible to all Americans. Beyond that, Frederick Douglass had faith—the democratic-republican faith—that all individuals are capable of self-government.

At the close of his Cooper Union Address, Lincoln warns against "invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said, and undo what Washington did." One step toward the improvement of political oratory today—both in substance and style—might be for our candidates for elective office (and their speechwriters) to stop talking long enough to read these volumes of *American Speeches*, especially the first. We need to be reminded of what those we are forever invoking really said. Perhaps someone might raise again the banner of "Liberty and equal rights, one and inseparable!" According to an 1859 speech by Carl Schurz, that pairing is the essence of "True Americanism."

Diana Schaub is a professor and chairman of the department of political science at Loyola College in Maryland.

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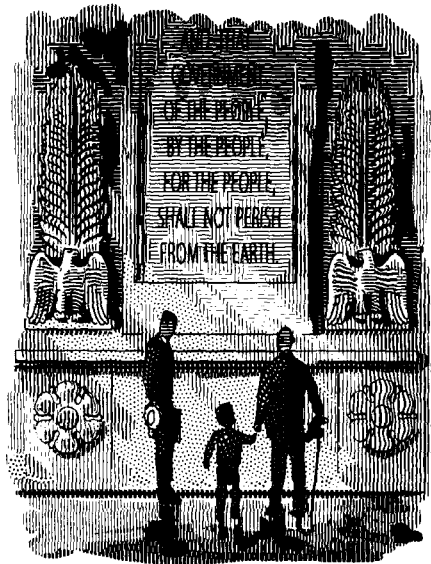
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Book Review by John C. Briggs

STATECRAFT AND WORDCRAFT

Lincoln's Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words, by Douglas L. Wilson.
Alfred A. Knopf, 352 pages, \$26.95

The Gettysburg Gospel: The Speech that Nobody Knows, by Gabor Boritt.
Simon & Schuster, 432 pages, \$28



INTERPRETERS OF LINCOLN WHO ATTEMPT to shed new light on his presidential speeches, especially the Gettysburg Address, enter a contested holy land. Did Lincoln speak the Address's precise words? Were they inspired—perhaps written at the last minute—or were they calculated, possibly long in advance, for political purposes? If the latter, what kind of political purposes were involved—low, high, or a mixture of both? More generally, close and reverent examinations of Abraham Lincoln's words run the hazard of neglecting the historical context and political milieu. Contextual readings, on the other hand, risk reducing his words to the mere product of historical forces. Besides, the meaning of context is problematical: is it better to understand Lincoln in terms of his own time or the years that have followed? Two new books by noted Lincoln scholars Douglas L. Wilson and Gabor Boritt approach these challenges in different yet complementary ways.

In *Lincoln's Sword*, Wilson attempts to evaluate Lincoln's literary achievement by understanding his technique as a writer. Focusing on how Lincoln revised and edited his prose, Wilson illuminates the increasingly precise phrasings that subtly and forcefully expressed Lincoln's intent. This attention to detail manifested, under the pressure of events, the literary greatness that strengthened Lincoln's presidency.

A co-director of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College and two-time winner of the Lincoln Prize (for this book and his previous work, *Honor's Voice: The Transformation of Abraham Lincoln*), Wilson studies the extant drafts of nine key texts, including the First Inaugural, the message to Congress on July 4, 1861, the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Second Inaugural. (The manuscripts are now available on the Library of Congress's website, thanks in part to Wilson's editorial assistance.) These documents exhibit the Civil War president's compositional style—particularly his reworking of his own words and his acceptance, rejection, and modification of friends' and advisors' suggestions. Wilson beautifully brings to light the advantages of Lincoln's habit of writing, which generated, over lengthy periods of time, seemingly isolated formulations of crucial ideas that were later assembled, honed, read to trial audiences, and honed again. He argues that Lincoln tried his words out in private, sometimes reading to just one person, not so much to elicit suggestions or monitor reactions as to experience the rhythms and resonances of his sentences in the presence of an audience. In other words, what mattered about his style was apparently his own sense, while in company, that he had composed what he had intended with the power to move his listeners. Even his habit of using commas in

seemingly odd places marked a tendency to *hear* rather than merely read the texts. He composed strategic pauses and emphases to guide the sort of reading that would make manifest the meaning of his crafted utterances.

MERE PERSUASION, WILSON ARGUES, could not have been Lincoln's goal. Lincoln formed and joined sentences in order to convey a compelling conviction based on logic and an understanding of founding principles. He knew that the bitterly divided public and press would have selectively expropriated or eviscerated less careful writings. He anticipated and tried to preempt objections, and thus his preemptions served a principled rhetorical form of statesmanship. For him, public opinion, like human nature itself, was resistant to change on the basis of oratorical persuasion. But since Stephen Douglas had begun to proclaim an indifference to slavery, Lincoln had seen how republican government could be eroded if the public lost confidence in its conviction that slavery was wrong. How then would they sustain the idea that American Founders had placed it in the course of ultimate extinction? Public opinion was everything to political success, Lincoln held. When it was necessary to persuade the public to change or restore itself, the wise statesman needed to act upon his understanding and respect for the public's convictions and

doubts, and then prepare the public mind for change by showing that what was needed was consistent with what the public deemed most important—even when the necessary changes exceeded the common understanding. Wilson, whose masterly, insightful, and analytic treatment of opinion is evidenced throughout this book, pays attention to the delicacies and risks involved in Lincoln's task.

Lincoln's revisions, at least where we have evidence that they occurred, moved from the personal toward the impersonal, from the active voice toward the oracular passive, from obviously complex formulations toward seemingly simple ones. Despite objections from some of his advisors, rough-hewn elements in Lincoln's reasoning often persisted as incisive characterizations of unpleasant truths, e.g., in the vernacular reference in the July 4th message to Congress to the South's "sugar-coated" attempts to persuade the North to accept its acts of rebellion. Likewise, Lincoln's complex, forceful sentence in the First Inaugural defending the suspension of habeas corpus survived untouched through that speech's extensive process of consultation and revision. Conversely, his acceptance and transformation of Secretary of State William Seward's suggested lines for a conclusion showed a genius for resonant simplicity.

Wilson's carefully sifted examples reveal that Lincoln was willing to drop a sentence from one of his public letters when, before publication, it was criticized as uncouth by a friendly newspaper editor. A few years later, he would accept Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase's culminating sentence for the Emancipation Proclamation after rejecting the same man's hyperbolic and polemical preamble. But then his momentous, understated, almost bureaucratic addition—"upon military necessity"—checked the swelling tone of Chase's addition while demonstrating Lincoln's resolve to carry out what he as president was proclaiming. Wilson concludes that Lincoln's crafted language enforced the integrity of the Proclamation "not by eloquence" but by "inexquisite language exquisitely suited to the occasion."

AS FOR LINCOLN'S MOST FAMOUS rhetorical display, Wilson suggests convincingly that the Gettysburg Address was written in stages over the weeks and perhaps months leading up to the cemetery's dedication, and so was not composed, or even substantially revised, on the train to Gettysburg or in the home of David Wills where Lincoln stayed the night before. The oration's unique fusion of the themes of equality, freedom, and self-government was in the works, Wilson argues, at least since Lincoln's speech in

1854 on the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Linguistic clues preceding the composition of the speech indicate a process of composition deeper and more slow-moving than what we normally recognize. Far from compromising the Address's appeal, this extended process of invention and assembly helps to reveal, in Wilson's analysis, the weight of Lincoln's words.

Gabor Boritt's *The Gettysburg Gospel* takes an apparently opposing view: that Lincoln's address remains "the speech that nobody knows." Professor of Civil War Studies and Director of the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, Boritt has studied hundreds of newspaper accounts and the letters and journals of Gettysburg residents, as well as testimony from later generations. He frames his inquiry as a pursuit of the speech's meaning in its immediate context and over time, without assuming from the outset that he knows its precise meaning or significance. In fact one of the premises of the book is that the exact meaning of the speech Lincoln delivered on that day has been in some ways indeterminate. The printed and draft versions of the speech are too diverse, the occasion too complicated and overladen with different expectations and experiences to preserve for posterity a single, detailed understanding of Lincoln's message.

Boritt's analysis of his sources provides a rich texture to the occasion for the speech, including a local history of Gettysburg in the months between the battle and the dedication of the cemetery at the battle site. During that time, the town had become a vast hospital caring for the thousands of wounded. The close-knit community of Gettysburg had experienced the lingering cost of the battle in a very concentrated way. For months it had faced the challenge of reconciling that cost with what was gained, with what might have been gained. Major newspapers covering the commemorative speeches hesitated to report these horrors. But Edward Everett, the featured speaker at the dedication, had studied the diary of a local nurse and noted her report in his oration. Lincoln later complimented him for his kind words for the nurses at Gettysburg. Boritt's book is largely concerned with telling the story behind those acknowledgments.

Newspaper coverage of the dedication was incomplete in other ways. Boritt's reading of letters and local journals shows that the press hardly registered the gleeful mood of the crowds the night before the ceremony. Among the 20,000 tipsy revelers, most of them visitors, were an inebriated and enthusiastically oratorical William Seward and one of Lincoln's secretaries, John Hay. Were the crowds anticipating inevitable victory, or sensing the Union's narrow escape? Was the occasion dominated by anticipation of the upcoming election cycle,

SECRETARY OF STATE
WILLIAM SEWARD'S
SUGGESTED LINES FOR
THE CLOSING PARAGRAPH
OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S
FIRST INAUGURAL
ADDRESS:

I close. We are not[,] we must not be aliens or enemies but fellow countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly they must not, I am sure they will not be broken. The mystic chords which proceeding from so many battle fields and so many patriot graves pass through all our hearts and all the hearts in this broad continent of ours will yet again harmonize in their ancient music when breathed upon by the guardian angel of the nation.

THE CLOSING
PARAGRAPH OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S
FIRST INAUGURAL
ADDRESS:

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

or was it a response to dread? What would victory mean, if it came? Most of the wounded had been moved to more permanent hospitals, but the celebration seems to have carried with it a sense of relief and sadness as well as jubilation. The press generally missed that mixture of moods, too, though the letters and journals preserved it. Boritt's interesting history of the townspeople's heroic agony makes us wonder.

AS FOR THE ADDRESS ITSELF, THIS BOOK assembles synoptic versions of Lincoln's mutable "gospel" text so that one can compare the surviving drafts (generally very similar, despite a few slight but significant modifications) and journalists' transcriptions (generally consistent, though sometimes ludicrously variant). Boritt reminds his readers that the subtle changes in Lincoln's diction and phrasing in the more finished (though apparently composite) version consistently increase the message's gravity and scope. "Carried on" gives way to "advanced," and "This we may, in all propriety do" becomes "It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."

Boritt's book supplies us with his interpretation of the Address, but with a caution arising from his study of its problematic history in American opinion and commentary. He asserts that Lincoln chose to deliver a speech that was ostensibly apolitical and yet deeply political. He argues that Lincoln's plain but artful choice of words was designed to unite those "desiring a quick radical route to equality" and those who supported the Union but "did not care about the issue of slavery or were actively hostile to the idea of Emancipation." Without overt reference to Christianity, he composed an oratorical poem of birth, sacrifice, and rebirth. Without calling a nation to arms, indeed by conceding the honored role to those who had struggled and died, it was also a war speech of inner preparation for new battles.

And yet whatever were Lincoln's purposes, did the audience hear his words? Did they understand them? Was the proliferation of slightly varying texts a sign of the power of Lincoln's

central message, or a sign of its malleability? Do the varying texts now help us discover Lincoln's waxing oratorical power, perhaps strengthened by an emergent faith in the Divine (for example, in the phrase "under God" that appears in some versions), or are they better understood as signs of the indeterminacy of the event—the immense complexity and sometimes contradictory interplay of speech and context that we call the Gettysburg Address? Boritt's analysis of the contemporary testimony reveals that spectators on the periphery wandered the battlefield while the audience around the platform observed a respectful silence punctuated with sometimes hesitant applause. The many meanings of the occasion—its mingling of mourning, jubilation, confusion, and consecration, its stimulation of efforts to renew the Union's resolve to fight and to begin the campaign for the next presidential election—fractured and layered the audience's response and our memory of what happened there. Boritt reports that Lincoln, upon leaving the platform after delivering his ten sentences, is said to have greeted his ceremonial guard of wounded veterans as though they were the actual speakers, the real occasion. He called them "orators" whose "appearance spoke louder than tongues."

ALTHOUGH HIS BOOK'S EMPHASIS ON multiple contexts and sources of testimony makes its reading of the actual speech sometimes disappointingly diffuse, Boritt's general approach helps to capture something important about how Lincoln's remarks were heard and remembered. Despite the problem of identifying an authoritative Gettysburg text, Americans continue to turn to Lincoln's Address as an invocation of basic principles in times of crisis and commemoration. Read *in solus* by New York's mayor in lower Manhattan after the destruction of the towers, it served both to rally the living and to remember the fallen. The speech has become embedded in an understanding of what it means to be an American. At the same time, Boritt does not hesitate to question the increasingly fashionable notion, held by Garry Wills and others,

that the "miraculous powers" of Lincoln's words have remade America. "How could a speech do that," Boritt asks, "especially one that was not heard distinctly in its own day?"

Although some newspapers and notable individuals praised the speech, he shows that it was neglected for years after Lincoln delivered it. The Emancipation Proclamation got almost all the attention. Only a couple of decades later did the Gettysburg Address grow prominent, Boritt argues, when Americans' reverence for Lincoln combined with their newfound desire to give democracy a "spiritual dimension" in order to foster political reconciliation without mandating full racial equality. Both North and South could adopt the speech as a gesture of inclusion (for *all* those who struggled) and use it to affirm the unity (confederated? federal? national?) of government of, by, and for the people. The nearly nonpartisan appropriation of Lincoln's words in the next century, and by revolutionaries in Asia, Africa, and Boritt's native Hungary (where he participated in the 1956 uprising that quoted Lincoln's address), demonstrates the speech's continuing power.

But universal acceptance is no guarantee against profound misunderstanding. The Address has been used to justify the Lost Cause. The schools have taken the speech for granted and thus ignored it, or mummified it in meaningless recitation. Since the 1960s much of the American Left, especially in the universities, has treated it and its author as racist. Scholarly treatments and Lincoln idolatry have occasionally twisted its meaning and influence to the point of monstrosity. Fortunately, American public opinion remains largely untouched by such misreadings. With informative, accessible prose, Douglas Wilson and Gabor Boritt demonstrate that close study of the Address and its context can broaden and deepen public opinion still.

John C. Briggs is professor of English at the University of California, Riverside, and the author of *Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered* (Johns Hopkins University Press).

Book Review by Carnes Lord

THE GREAT TRIUMVIRATE

The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World,
by John O'Sullivan. Regnery, 448 pages, \$27.95



IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THIS HIGHLY readable tale of the Cold War's endgame is John O'Sullivan's first book. A British-born conservative journalist, O'Sullivan was for many years editor of *National Review*, and before that a policy advisor to prime minister Margaret Thatcher (and ghost author of her very fine memoir). The story of the conservative resurgence in Britain and in the United States under Thatcher and Reagan is a familiar one, but it is still important to be reminded how crucial the statesmanship of these two remarkable figures was in seeing the Cold War through to its stunning yet virtually bloodless conclusion. Pope John Paul II is perhaps a less expected presence in this tale, but what makes O'Sullivan's account unique and gives it its effective narrative focus is the evolving set of relationships among all three figures. As is only to be expected in the case of leaders with such differing perspectives and responsibilities, these relationships were not without friction. But their collaboration proved to be more than the sum of its parts, and there can be little doubt that it contributed decisively to the Soviet imperium's confusion and ultimate ruin.

It is remarkable enough that this unlikely trio—seemingly marginal figures thought too American, too Catholic, or too conservative by their own particular establishments—achieved in quick succession the highest office available

to each of them. That they were able to impose their authority quickly and effectively is truly spectacular. It is all the more sobering to be reminded that their collaboration was almost derailed before it had fairly begun. By an uncanny coincidence, all three of these leaders were victims of assassination attempts that could easily have succeeded. Reagan was shot by the deranged John Hinckley on a Washington street in March 1981 and gravely wounded—more so than was realized at the time or by many since (his doctors helped to paint a bright face on his condition). Pope John Paul was gunned down in St. Peter's Square in May of the same year by Mehmet Ali Agca, apparently a professional assassin who very likely had connections to the Bulgarian intelligence service, and through it to the Soviet KGB. In both instances, a few millimeters' difference in the bullets' trajectories would have meant death. In October 1984, a powerful bomb planted by the Irish Republican Army exploded in Brighton's Grand Hotel where Mrs. Thatcher was attending the annual Tory Party conference; five people were killed, including a Tory M.P. and the wife of a cabinet minister. One of the rooms of the prime minister's suite was virtually destroyed just a few minutes after she had been in it. O'Sullivan does not shy away from wondering whether a providential hand was at work in all this.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF REAGAN, Thatcher, and John Paul II cannot be appreciated except against the grim background of Western decline and demoralization in the 1970s. The American intellectual and political elite were demoralized by the crisis of "liberalism" (O'Sullivan's word) brought on by the 1960s' cultural revolution, as well as by the oil price spikes of 1973 and '79, the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, and the growing Soviet menace. The author provides a withering portrait of the United States under Jimmy Carter's "post-American" administration, with its curious combination of "missionary zeal and practical failure." Carter congratulated the American people for overcoming their "inordinate fear of Communism" at a time when Soviet military power was at its zenith and the Soviets were on the march in the Third World, including in America's Central American backyard. At the same time, Carter seemed disposed to blame the sour mood of Americans oppressed by gas shortages, inflation, and high interest rates on some moral failure—the "malaise" of his infamous 1979 speech—on the part of the American people themselves. And the Carter Administration as a whole foundered on its inability to foresee or deal with the new threat on the horizon—Islamist terrorism in the form of the American embassy employees seized in Tehran by devotees of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

In Britain the statist consensus of Labour and the old Tories, abetted by a labor movement heavily influenced by orthodox Marxism, had driven the British economy into the ground. In 1975, in preparation for a visit to the United States by Thatcher as the newly elected Tory Party leader, Henry Kissinger reportedly said to President Ford that "Britain is a tragedy—it has sunk to begging, borrowing and stealing until North Sea oil comes in." As for the Catholic Church, for the first time its standing as a stalwart adversary of international Communism seemed unsure. Parts of the Church, particularly in Latin America, had begun flirting with "liberation theology," a Marxist perversion of Christianity that sought political power through revolutionary violence, while at the same time, the Vatican felt compelled to soften its diplomacy with the Soviet bloc in order to protect the faithful in Eastern Europe. (On top of this, the Church was weakened by internal divisions after reaffirming its teaching on artificial birth control.)

The first order of business for both Thatcher and Reagan was to fix their respective economies. For Thatcher, the key was to crush the power of the unions and privatize what was in effect a socialist economy. For Reagan, it was to curb inflation and jump-start economic activity through tax cuts. It is easy to forget the short-term pain these measures caused, especially America's deep 1981-82 recession; unflinching political leadership was indispensable to their success in both countries. And success it was, beyond the wildest imaginings even of sympathetic economic advisors and commentators—a 20-year boom that jolted Britain from its East German-style coma to become the fourth largest economy in the world, and in America's case, unleashed the entrepreneurial forces that ushered in the information age and the 1990s' stock market explosion. What's more, as O'Sullivan rightly emphasizes, the example they set deeply influenced the economic policies of governments and parties (including Britain's own Labour Party under Tony Blair) throughout the world, and continues to do so today.

WHEN ASKED ONCE WHAT HIS vision was for the Cold War, Reagan responded: "We win, they lose." It is still not widely understood how radically the president was willing to depart from the entrenched mainstream of American foreign policy thinking in an effort to bring down the Soviet Union and put an end to the Communist experiment—an experiment he was convinced was contrary to human nature and thus fundamentally unsustainable. Reagan had a better understanding of both the strengths of his own country and the weaknesses of the Soviet adversary than did the American national

security establishment (and, for that matter, many of his own advisors). He believed that Western experts grossly overestimated the size and health of the Soviet economy (he was later proved correct), while underestimating the potential of the captive nations to resist their Soviet masters. Reagan proceeded very deliberately to devise and implement a grand strategy intended to capitalize on these conditions.

In the first place, the United States launched a campaign of virtual economic warfare against the Soviet Union (perhaps not sufficiently highlighted in O'Sullivan's account), including such measures as covert interference with Soviet efforts to steal Western technology, collusion with the Saudis to depress the price of oil (the main source of Soviet hard currency), and efforts to curtail Soviet access to Western bank loans. The massive military buildup Reagan also initiated at the outset of his administration was understood as an integral part of this strategy, forcing the Soviets to shoulder the economic burden of adding to an already unsustainable level of defense spending.

Equally important, however, were the steps Reagan took to renew ideological warfare against the East. U.S. overseas broadcasting was revitalized and ramped up, and a major initiative was launched to promote democratic institutions throughout the world. But more than that, the president took it upon himself to speak directly to the Soviet empire's oppressed populations. Using language that had not been heard from an American president since the early Cold War, if indeed even then, he called that empire "evil" and predicted, with a fine twist of irony at the expense of the Soviet founding father, that Communism would end on the "ash heap of history." His refusal to acknowledge the Communist system's legitimacy, and his message of hope to the Eastern peoples, were profoundly subversive, and meant to be so. Unlike the American foreign policy establishment of the day, Reagan saw no merit in contributing to Eastern Europe's "stability" under Soviet rule.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE Soviets was Poland. There, the rise of the Solidarity movement offered the Reagan Administration a golden opportunity to begin the "rollback" of the Iron Curtain. The fascinating question is whether the Cold War would have played out as it did without the remarkable intervention in Polish affairs in the early 1980s by Pope John Paul II, the first Polish pope. As Archbishop of Krakow over the previous two decades, John Paul (then Karol Wojtyła) had ingeniously frustrated Poland's Soviet rulers with a carefully orchestrated "cultural resistance" that escaped retaliation while exposing the fragility of the totalitarian oc-

cupation. O'Sullivan's detailed account of the parallel and occasionally intersecting efforts of Washington and the Vatican to nurture and protect a Polish opposition movement is the strongest part of his book.

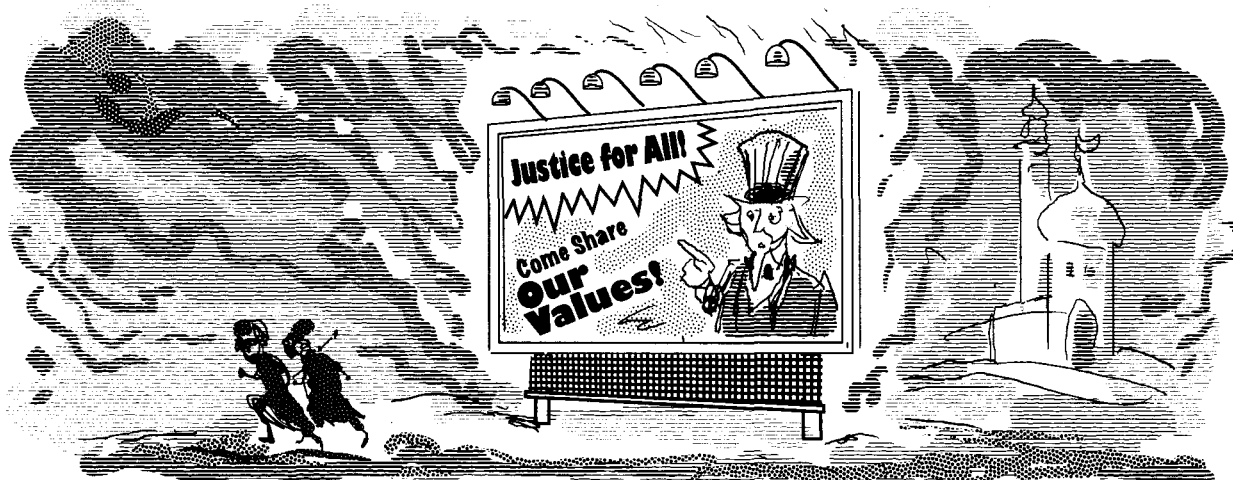
O'Sullivan is also good on the arms control and nuclear policy issues that were so central to the U.S.-Soviet relationship in this crucial period. This is one of the few areas where policy disagreements between the United States and Britain led to personal confrontations between Reagan and Thatcher (another had to do with the American invasion of Grenada in 1983). Reagan's nuclear abolitionism and his support for ballistic missile defense did not go down well with the prime minister or the other NATO allies, who feared they would lead to a "decoupling" of the U.S. and Western Europe and increase the latter's vulnerability to Soviet conventional attack. O'Sullivan recounts a telling exchange during a Reagan-Thatcher meeting in July 1985. Responding to her argument that deep reductions in nuclear weapons would "expose a dramatic conventional imbalance" and thus require an expensive buildup of conventional forces, Reagan replied: "Yes, that's exactly what I imagined." This politically explosive comment went no further at the time. But Reagan predicted essentially what has occurred in the intervening years, as advances in conventional precision strike technologies have permitted the United States to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons to very near zero. It is also clear that Reagan's nuclear abolitionism, dictated by a deeply felt moral conviction, was an important factor in gaining the pope's tacit support for American military policy, in spite of the vocal hostility to it by many in the Catholic hierarchy.

If anything is missing from O'Sullivan's account, it is a sense of the tremendous obstacles Reagan faced in implementing his vision within his own government. (The book is somewhat more attentive to Thatcher's constant struggle with the Tory "Wets.") That mistakes were made—the Iran-Contra scandal notably—is not surprising given the factionalism and freelancing that dogged the administration from the beginning. Some have faulted the president for not doing more to bring order to his own house. Yet Reagan had a long view, he knew his own strengths and limitations, he did what he had to do, and the rest is—history. Along with the prime minister and the pope, this president has shaped our own world in ways we tend to take for granted, but which John O'Sullivan wants to make sure we do not forget.

Carnes Lord is professor of naval and military strategy at the U.S. Naval War College and author of The Modern Prince: What Leaders Need to Know Now (Yale University Press).

Essay by Robert R. Reilly

WINNING THE WAR OF IDEAS



AMERICAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IS IN disarray. We are not winning—indeed, we are hardly waging—the war of ideas, and it is vitally important that we do, because in our war against the radical Islamists the final victory will take place not on the battlefield but in the minds of men.

The purpose of U.S. public diplomacy is to reach key audiences in foreign countries, outside of the bilateral channels of traditional diplomatic relations, with ideas that are powerful enough to form their disposition toward us and our political purposes in the world. In essence, public diplomacy is the defense and promotion of America's principles beyond our shores. To advance a particular policy at a specific time—a free trade agreement, say, or an arms control measure—we have traditional public relations. In times of national peril, the call goes forth not for more public relations, but for a public diplomacy that can engage in the war of ideas.

First, in order to fight a war of ideas, one has to have an idea. This is not as simple as it may sound. A war of ideas is a struggle over the very nature of reality for which people are willing to die. Therefore, one must formulate the ideas that are so central to one's life that one is not willing to live without them. For a nation successfully to project such ideas, there must be a broad consensus within it as to what those ideas are.

Second, one cannot go into a war of ideas until one understands the ideas one is at war with. Such wars are always conducted in terms of moral legitimacy. The defense of one's ideas and the attack on those of the enemy are conducted with moral rhetoric. "Axis of evil" is a perfect example, as is "the great Satan." All moral differences are at root theological.

Third, wars of ideas, by definition, can only be fought by and with people who think. This defines the natural target audience for this war, the so-called "elites." The term "elite" is not determined by social or economic status, but by intellectual capabilities. Trying to use ideas to influence people who do not think is an exercise in futility. Such people are led and influenced by those who do think.

Fourth, along with a consistency of purpose, one must have the organizational and financial means for conducting a war of ideas over the course of generations. Ideas, when they are profound enough to form the basis of a civilization, or its negation, have a prolonged gestational period. K.P.S. Gill, India's foremost authority on counterterrorism, has said that, in Kashmir, radical Islamists taught their doctrines in madrasas for two decades before the occurrence of any terrorist acts. After this period of gestation, *the war of ideas was already won* in the minds of the students who then formed the cadre of Islamist terrorist organizations. The same is true in other parts of the Islamic world. The war of ideas requires institutions that are capable of countering this kind of indoctrination over similarly lengthy periods, i.e., decades.

Our Ideas

THOUGH ITS FORM HAS CHANGED, today's war of ideas is not new. On our side, it has its provenance in the American Founding. The source of our moral legitimacy was announced in the Declaration of Independence, addressed out of "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" to the entire world. Apart from the apparent need to

solicit foreign assistance, why did the founders of the United States feel it necessary to do this? After all, a revolution against the British crown in 13 small colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America would hardly seem to have been an event requiring the attention of the world. The founders were bold enough to turn to the world in setting forth the justification for their undertaking because the principles to which they were appealing are based upon truths that they claimed to be universal. By universal, they meant true everywhere, at all times, for everyone. These self-evident truths are the God-given, inalienable rights that each human being possesses, that governments are instituted to guarantee, and from which alone they derive their just powers.

In effect, the Declaration of Independence was the first public diplomacy document of the United States. Everything done in U.S. public diplomacy is, or should be, an elaboration of this pronouncement. For instance, the U.S. government's radio and TV broadcasting efforts are an outgrowth of the Declaration in their efforts to address the world as to the moral legitimacy of the United States. The underlying presumption is that members of the audience possess these rights no less than we, and that is why we speak to them with respect and without condescension. It is why we appeal to their reason in our attempts to present, out of the decent respect for the opinions of mankind, our case before them. The case now, as it was then, is for freedom and democracy, for the exercise of those inalienable rights for all people. President George W. Bush was referring to this mission when he said in his first inaugural address, "Our democratic faith is more than a creed of

our country.... Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations."

This message has inspired and given hope to millions of people around the world. However, the people who hate the United States understand it as well, and deeply fear it. The last thing they wish their people to hear is that they, too, possess these same God-given inalienable rights and ought to have the free exercise thereof. The enemies of freedom find this truth to be the most dangerous weapon we employ. It helped to defeat the Nazis in World War II and the Soviet Empire in the Cold War.

Their Ideas

IN THIS NEW WAR, THE CHARACTER OF THE enemy is defined by the term *Islamism*, as distinct from Islam. Like all "ism"s, this term indicates a transmogrification of reality. Islamism is the ideologization of Islam. Drawing on several of the many strands of Islamic tradition (Kharijites, Asharites, Ibn Taymiyya, etc.), radical Islamists reduce God to his omnipotence, concentrating exclusively on His unlimited power, as against His reason. God's "reasons" are unknowable by man. God rules as He pleases. There is no rational order invested in the universe upon which one can rely, only the second-to-second manifestation of God's will. This view results in anti-rationalism which, in turn, nourishes irrational behavior.

Radical Islamists translate their version of God's omnipotence into a politics of unlimited power. As God's instruments, they are channels for this power. The primacy of force, on which their endeavor is based, necessitates the denigration of reason as a means to know the world or God. Once the primacy of force is posited, terrorism becomes the next logical step to power, as it did in the 20th-century secular ideologies of power, Nazism and Marxism-Leninism. This is what led Osama bin Laden to embrace the astonishing statement of his spiritual godfather, Abdullah Azzam, which bin Laden quoted in the November 2001 video, released after 9/11: "Terrorism is an obligation in Allah's religion."

The radical Islamists are the new totalitarians, with the ironic twist that, unlike 20th-century totalitarians, they are not secular. However, this is a distinction without a difference because they share with atheist ideologues the belief that power is the primary constituent of reality. The Arab jihadist volunteers who went to Iraq to fight for the fascist regime of Saddam Hussein—a cynical secularist who manipulated Islam for his own purposes—did not do so simply because they shared his anti-Americanism. Saddam Hussein and the Islamist fighters met at the nexus at which the

secular and the theological views of unlimited power coincide. Like 20th-century totalitarians, radical Islamists also use this shared view of reality to dehumanize large portions of mankind, justifying their slaughter—albeit in their case as "infidels," rather than as non-Aryans or bourgeoisie.

False Advertising

FACED WITH THIS NEW ENEMY, HOW HAS America deployed its intellectual weapons? How has America communicated to the world the view of reality for which we are willing to fight and die?

After 9/11, the State Department and U.S. international broadcasting turned to the advertising world and its executives, including from MTV, to meet the enemy in the war of ideas. Unfortunately, American advertising became not only the primary but the preferred means by which to present ourselves to the world. Typically, this approach was translated into TV commercials showing happy Muslims in the United States, under the rubric of "Shared Values," and new radio stations playing pop music to Arabs and Iranians, under the same assumption of whatever "shared values" such music expresses.

The general approach of advertising is to try to influence an audience with a short attention span by using subliminal messages to affect short-term behavior. In other words, the means of advertising determine the message. It reduces the war of ideas to slogans that are of marginal use in persuading thoughtful people concerning matters of life and death.

Not only do the means restrict the message, the message itself is wrong. When the rainbow of diversity that is popularly celebrated in America leads the message, it leaves the impression upon foreign audiences that the United States is indifferent to the various claims to ultimate truth that its assorted representatives put forth. Islam is just another item on the shelf of American consumer society, chosen for its level of personal satisfaction. Smiling American Muslims are simply happy shoppers in the cafeteria of religions. This implied demotion of the importance of what is believed to be true inadvertently inflames believers. America is seen as shallow.

The objective of the TV ads presenting happy Muslims in the U.S. was laudable in so far as it intended to demonstrate tolerance and the fact that the U.S. does not consider itself at war with Islam, both important points. However, it was the wrong message for the audience. The fact that Islam is tolerated here is not a particularly persuasive message to Muslims who think that Islam is true. In fact, it is likely to be seen as condescending. Also, a demonstration of tolerance is not a convincing message to those who

do not think tolerance is a virtue, but a sign of moral decline.

Because of their inherent limitations, these ads could not begin to suggest the moral principles from which such tolerance is drawn. Muslims are not free in the United States because the United States thinks Islam is the source of happiness, but because the United States recognizes Muslims as human beings with inalienable rights. It is precisely that recognition that is absent in many of the Muslim countries that deny such rights to their heterodox Muslim and non-Muslim citizens. The sanctity of the individual and the inviolability of conscience are not doctrines necessarily recognized by an audience that does not have a framework in which to receive them.

In other words, contending claims to truth are often incompatible. That is why there is a war of ideas in the first place. It is a mistake to fudge this issue and to offer a derivative virtue—tolerance—in place of the larger truth from which it stems. If there is to be a war, let it be of one claim to truth against another—not of a seeming indifference to truth on our side against an absolute claim to it on the other. For if we take the side of relativism, we will lose. The West today appears to be offering greater freedom with no purpose, as against the Islamist offering of personal submission to a higher purpose.

Battle of the Bands

CONSIDER THE VOICE OF AMERICA, the premier broadcasting arm of the U.S. government. VOA's mission is to express and serve the enduring interests of the United States, which include, most importantly, the spread of its democratic principles. Since 9/11, VOA has spun off Arabic and Farsi language services especially critical to the war of ideas and transformed them into primarily music stations, Radio Sawa and Radio Farda. The model for doing so is commercial. For a commercial broadcaster, large numbers mean survival. Large audiences, demographically defined in the Arab and Persian worlds as youth audiences, are attracted by popular music formats, like youth audiences everywhere. However, this approach shares the faulty assumptions of the "Shared Values" TV ad campaign, albeit in a different manner.

Numbers of listeners certainly matter, but not as much as *who* is listening—and to *what*. The Voice of America was designed to operate without the financial pressures of commercial media in order to be able to afford to tell the whole truth about the United States, including its full cultural depth and spiritual resonance. VOA has always used music to attract

audiences. For example, Willis Conover's jazz program broadcast on VOA to Soviet audiences during the Cold War was one of the most successful radio programs in history. However, it was offered within a format devoted mainly to substance—news, editorials, and features. That ratio has now been reversed with music occupying as much as, or more than, 80% of the hour in Radio Sawa. The more like commercial radio U.S. broadcasting becomes, the less reason it has to exist. After all, the image of America created by the popular media is the cliché that often repels much of the world. U.S. broadcasting has the duty to reveal the character of the American people in such a way that the underlying principles of American life are revealed. Music with a sprinkling of news cannot do this.

The U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors oversees the VOA, and the level of confusion on the Board has been so profound that its leading members do not even consider broadcasting to be part of U.S. public diplomacy. At a town hall meeting at the Voice of America on September 10, 2002, Chairman Ken Tomlinson told the employees, "You can't intertwine public diplomacy with broadcasting." Board member Ted Kaufman responded, "I couldn't agree with the chairman more...we've got to start thinking about ourselves separate from public diplomacy." This loss of a sense of mission has been reflected in the changes the Board has made.

Radio Sawa, for example, has two brief, bulletin-style newscasts in the hour. The rest is American pop and Arabic music, including, according to Sawa's progenitor, Broadcasting Board Governor Norman Pattiz, "everyone from Eminem to J.Lo to Britney Spears." Mr. Pattiz told the *New Yorker* that "it was MTV that brought down the Berlin Wall," a statement of breathtaking ignorance. In October 2002, Chairman Tomlinson approvingly quoted his Naval Academy graduate son: Britney Spears's "music represents the sounds of freedom." Based upon this extraordinary assumption, the Board of Governors transformed the substantive programming of VOA's and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Farsi services into another mostly music station modeled on Sawa. The war of ideas has been demoted to the battle of the bands.

The Primacy of Reason

INSTEAD OF RESPECTFULLY APPEALING TO the mind as recommended by the Declaration of Independence, out of a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, the new nearly all-music formats pander to another part of the human anatomy. The act of condescension implicit in this new format is not lost on

the very part of the audience that we should wish to influence the most—those who think.

One of the facile explanations for why U.S. government broadcasting has been reoriented to huge youth audiences and away from elites is that "democracy is a mass movement"—a tautology that overlooks the fact that mass movements are formed and led by leaders who think. *The Federalist* was not the result of a mass movement, but the foundation for one. Those who worry over the moral health of their own societies despise the vulgar part of American popular culture. Since that part of American culture is already available in their societies, why should it be officially reinforced by a U.S. government broadcast? Becoming the caricature of ourselves is bad U.S. public diplomacy.

If we want the world to be reasonable, we had better give it our reasons. The primacy of reason in Western thought is the principal cause of its success in developing science and constitutional government, both of which may be said to emanate from natural law. The primacy of reason is also the source of tolerance, as only reasonable people can "reason" together over even fundamental differences.

Many strains and schools of Islam are open to reason in this way (indeed, this view was often dominant during Islam's golden age). A successful public diplomacy would support their advancement and encourage, through third parties (since non-Muslims are not welcome as direct interlocutors in this debate), the resuscitation of natural law thinking in the Islamic world. This may sound like an abstruse endeavor, but without it, as many Muslims know, there is no hope for the Islamic Umma to enter the modern world. The radical Islamists are violently opposed to Muslim thinkers who espouse a development of Islam's dormant natural law tradition because it represents a potent threat to them from within Islam itself. It is exactly based upon such thinking that we must facilitate the creation and reinforcement of an anti-totalitarian social and intellectual network throughout the Islamic world.

Organizing for the Long Haul

TODAY, THERE IS NO SINGLE GOVERNMENT institution whose sole responsibility is the conduct of the war of ideas. As a result, no government agency feels responsible for it. This mission used to belong to the United States Information Agency, which at the height of the Cold War had some 10,000 employees (including foreign nationals) and a \$1 billion budget. After the end of the Cold War, USIA's functions were dispersed to the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Within the State Department, public

diplomacy functions were further dispersed to regional and other bureaus, making coordination and control by the new Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs problematic at best.

This is structurally dysfunctional in several ways. Diplomacy and public diplomacy often conflict. Diplomacy deals in government to government contacts. It may at times require support for an authoritarian regime, while at the same time public diplomacy may be cultivating support for democracy in that country. The State Department does not, and should not be expected to, give priority to public diplomacy. The State Department should concentrate on the implementation of the broad range of the president's policies. Public diplomacy should concentrate on the longer-range goal of winning the war of ideas.

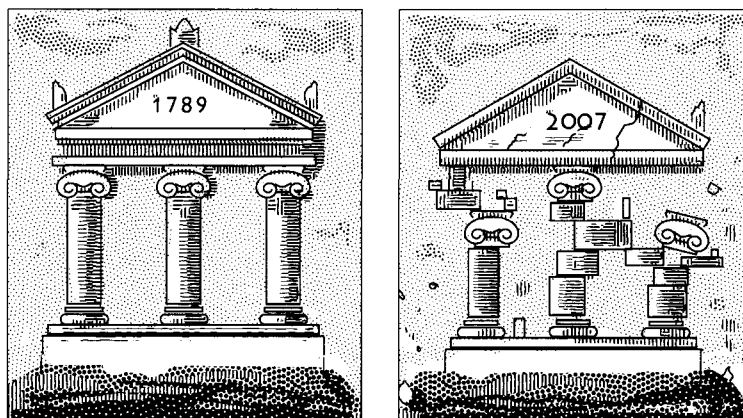
We need a central U.S. government institution within which policy, personnel, and budget can be deployed coherently to implement a multifaceted strategy to fight the war of ideas over an extended period of time. Without it, the U.S. will remain largely absent from the field. In this time of crisis, a new USIA-like organization should be created that can articulate and promulgate American ideals to the world and counter hostile propaganda. This new cabinet-level communications agency, independent of the State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA, could maintain a strategic focus on aiding Muslim liberals and moderates, and not get lost in daily "spin" control. It would be staffed by people who know substantively what the "war of ideas" is about and have the regional expertise to operate across the Muslim world and in other vital regions. Its director should report to the president.

Currently, annual U.S. public diplomacy expenditures approximate McDonald's global budget for promoting its burgers. This is roughly half of what Saudi Arabia has spent yearly for the past two decades to spread Wahhabism throughout the Muslim world and here. This \$1.4 billion (1/365th of the Pentagon's budget) is grotesquely inadequate and needs to be trebled for starters.

If our troops were sent into battle without proper arms or ammunition, we would be rightly outraged at this unconscionable and deadly negligence. They offer, for our sakes, the last full measure of devotion, and we understand that we owe them the last full measure of support. It is no less unconscionable—and no less deadly—to send them into battle without explaining the cause for which they are fighting to both our enemies and our friends.

Robert R. Reilly was the 25th director of the Voice of America.

TAMING BIG GOVERNMENT



SIR LEWIS NAMIER, THE NOTED BRITISH historian of an earlier generation, once wrote that “when discoursing or writing about history, [people] imagine it in terms of their own experience, and when trying to gauge the future they cite supposed analogies from the past: till, by double process of repetition, they imagine the past and remember the future.” Great controversies, which often feature adversaries citing the same historical materials to opposite effect, confirm the truth of Namier’s cautionary observation. In the United States, where great controversies tend to be constitutional controversies, disagreement about our charter’s origins and meaning has been a defining feature of American political discourse from the republic’s earliest days.

After nearly 220 years, one could say that Americans have more constitutional speculation than they know what to do with—a fact readily confirmed by almost any volume of any law review, not to mention the proliferating gaggle of legal experts who fill the airwaves on cable news shows. A cynic might infer from differing scholarly opinions that debate about constitutional meaning is so much rhetorical gamesmanship. But if that is so, if politics may indeed be reduced to sophistry, why bother to have a written constitution at all?

Most Americans would reply that a written constitution is the only kind worth having. They bear a decent respect for their nation’s origins and founding documents, which they have no trouble believing were inspired by divine providence. They come by the millions every year from all over the country to the National Archives in Washington, or to the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, to gaze upon the original parchments of the Declaration of Independence and the

Constitution. They take pride in knowing that the Constitution, which was up and running before Napoleon came to power, has survived innumerable crises, including a dreadful civil war, yet emerged largely intact.

Liberals are wary of pious attachment to the past, considering it an expression of foolish sentimentality or a mask for some contemporary venal interest, but in either event as an impediment to progress. They are particularly suspicious about the framers’ motives, which they tend to explain in terms of narrow self-interest, and are dogmatically skeptical about our founding documents’ natural rights principles, dismissing them as so much wrong-headed and outmoded philosophical speculation. The resultant Constitution fares no better. It, too, is suspect for many reasons—failing to abolish slavery for one—but most of all because it sought to instantiate a regime of limited government. But, in the end, liberals care little about what the framers may have meant, for times have changed. They may object to the crudity of Henry Ford’s assertion that “history is more or less bunk,” but they do not essentially disagree with his sentiment. Liberals esteem not history, but History, which to them confirms the law of ceaseless change.

They are stuck, nevertheless, with a people reared under the aegis of a written Constitution whose authors affirmed the permanence of certain political truths. Most Americans remain stubbornly convinced that the framers got things mostly right on government’s basic principles. From the Progressive movement’s early days until the present hour, the liberals’ medicine for this notable lack of popular enlightenment has consisted in one long effort to deconstruct the founding. The permanence of the Declaration’s truths is denied; the framers’

inability or refusal to resolve the issue of slavery is attributed to moral hypocrisy; the architecture of the Constitution is read as a series of mischievous devices to frustrate majority rule or to protect the ruling class’s interests. These and similar critiques, which by gradual degrees have worked their way into standard textbooks and school curricula, have taken their toll on patriotic sentiment.

Old habits, however, die hard, which helps to explain the intellectual chaos of contemporary constitutional debate. Respect for the founding principles, though wounded, refuses to die; the new dispensation, though powerful, has yet to triumph. Whatever else may have accrued from the effort to deconstruct the founding, this much seems clear: the once common ground of constitutional discourse has fallen away. Witness the current debate between originalists and proponents of the “living” Constitution: they disagree about the meaning of constitutional wording, to be sure; but their deepest disagreement has to do with whether and why 18th-century words and concepts should now matter at all.

What Wilson Wrought

THE OUTCOME OF THIS DEBATE HAS YET to be determined, but it has produced a number of notable anomalies, particularly with respect to the separation of powers. Ever since Woodrow Wilson set pen to paper, liberals have expressed frustration with, if not outright scorn for, the separation of powers. They read it almost exclusively in terms of its checking-and-balancing function, i.e., as a barrier that for many decades prevented the national government from enacting progressive social and economic policies. The other half of James

Madison's elegant argument for separating powers—energizing government through the clash of rival and opposite ambitions—seems to have escaped their attention altogether, as has the framers' understanding that government powers differ not only in degree, but in kind. Transfixed by their own deconstruction of the founding as an effort to frustrate popular majorities, liberals find it hard to believe that the framers could have imagined the need for powerful government or a powerful chief executive. Indeed, a dominant theme of early Progressive thought—one still widely shared today—advanced the notion that the Constitution meant to enshrine legislative primacy. Accordingly, energetic presidents prior to the modern era are seen as exceptions that prove the rule, their boldness being variously attributed to the peculiarities of personality, short-term aberrational events, or national emergencies such as the Civil War—to everything, in short, except the intended purpose of Article II of the Constitution. It was only after decades of struggle, so the argument continues, that a new constitutional order, with the president as its driving force, came to ultimate fruition in the New Deal.

This reading of the founding and of American political history has a surface plausibility, fed in no small part by the republican Whig rhetoric that was so fashionable in much early American discourse. Upon closer examination, however, it turns out that congressional dominance is not the only story that emerges from 19th-century political history. As a large and growing body of thoughtful revisionist inquiry has demonstrated, that history is no less the story of effective presidential leadership that drew upon Article II's deliberately capacious language. Notwithstanding, contemporary liberal doctrine remains deeply indebted to the original Progressive indictment of the founding, and especially to Woodrow Wilson's thought, which remains the philosophical wellspring of almost every constitutional prescription in the liberal pharmacopoeia.

After flirting with the idea of grafting a parliamentary system onto the American constitutional structure, Wilson made a virtue of necessity by reconceiving the Office of the President. The nation's chief executive would defeat the original Constitution's structural obstacles by, so to speak, rising above them. Wilson's chosen instrument for this purpose was party government, which would breach the parchment barriers dividing president and Congress and unite both through a common policy agenda initiated by the president. The president would make the case for policy innovation directly to the people. Once armed with plebiscitary legitimacy, he might more easily prod an otherwise parochial

Congress to address national needs. Madisonian fears about the mischiefs of faction would be overcome by separating politics and administration: Congress and the president would jointly settle upon the desired policy agenda, but its details, both in design and execution, would rely on non-partisan expert administrators' special insight and technical skill, operating under the president's general direction and control.

The presidency, thus reconceived, would by turns become a voice for and dominant instrument of a reconceived Constitution, which would at last detach itself from a foolish preoccupation with limited government. The old Constitution's formal structure would be retained, insofar as that might be politically necessary; but it would be essentially emptied of its prior substantive content. In Wilson's view, the growth of executive power would parallel the growth of government in general. The president would no longer be seen as, at best, Congress's co-equal or, at worst, the legislature's frustrated servant. Henceforth, he would be seen as proactive government's innovator-in-chief, one who was best positioned to understand historical tendencies and to unite them with popular yearnings. In an almost mystical sense, the president would embody the will of the people, becoming both a prophet and steward of a new kind of egalitarian Manifest Destiny at home and, in the fullness of time, perhaps throughout the world.

Unintended Consequences

THE RESULT OF WILSON'S VISION IS THE administrative state we know today. Although it has retained the original Constitution's structural appearances, the new order has profoundly altered its substance—though not precisely in the way that Wilson intended, as we shall see. The arguments that once supported the ideas of federalism and limited government have fallen into desuetude: state power today is exercised largely at the national government's sufferance, and if there is a subject or activity now beyond federal reach, one would be hard-pressed to say what it might be. As for the separation of powers, while the branches remain institutionally separate, the lines between legislative, executive, and judicial power have become increasingly blurred. The idea that government power ought to be differentiated according to function has given way to the concept that power is more or less fungible. The dominant understanding of separated powers today—see the late Richard Neustadt's widely accepted argument in *Presidential Power* (1960)—is that the branches of government compete with one another for market share.

While most liberals continue to celebrate the old order's decline, the more thoughtful among them have expressed reservations of late about certain consequences of the Wilsonian revolution. It is widely remarked in the scholarly literature on the presidency, for example, that we have come to expect almost impossible things of modern presidents, and that presidents in turn come to office with almost impossible agendas to match heightened public expectations. After many decades of living with the modern presidency, it can be argued that the effort to rise above the separation of powers has only exposed presidents the more to the unmediated whimsies of public opinion. Far from being masters of all they survey, modern presidents are pulled this way and that by factional demands generated by an administrative state over which they exercise nominal but very little actual control.

The presidency's transformation has radically altered our system of government, but it poses a particular problem for liberals. The difficulty begins in their appetite for big government. Indeed, liberals can identify enough unmet needs, unfulfilled hopes, and frustrated dreams to satisfy the federal government's redistributionist and regulatory ambitions as far into the future as the eye can see. An already large and unwieldy federal establishment, expanding to meet the rising expectations of an ever more demanding and dependent public, threatens to become yet larger, more powerful, and harder to control. But, despite what bureaucrats might wish to believe about the beneficial effects of their expertise, the administrative state is not a machine that can run itself. It requires coherent policy direction; it needs to be managed with reasonable efficiency; and it has to be held politically accountable. As a practical matter, only a president can do these things, but with rare exceptions, presidents are prevented, mainly by Congress but also by the judiciary, from performing any of these tasks well.

It is here that a bastardized version of the separation of powers remains alive and well. The short history of the administrative state since at least the New Deal is a tale of protracted conflict between Congress and the president for control of its ever-expanding machinery. After initial resistance, which remained formidable until roughly 40 years ago, Congress has finally learned to love big government as much as, if not more than, presidents do. As political scientist Morris Fiorina has shown, Congress loves it because it pays handsome political returns. The returns come from greasing the wheels of the federal establishment to deliver an increasing array of goods and services to constituents and interest groups, who reward congressional inter-



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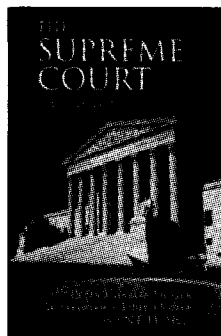
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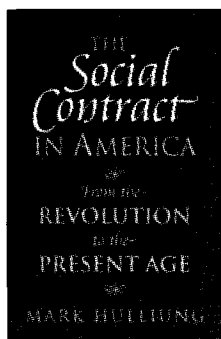
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The New Spoils System

INDEED, CONGRESSMEN HAVE BECOME extraordinarily adept at badgering this agency or that program administrator for special favors—or for failing to carry out "the will of Congress." In most cases this means the will of a particular representative who sits on the agency's authorization or appropriations committee, and who has been importuned by a politically relevant interest group to complain about some bureaucratic excess or failure. Modern congressional oversight has become an elaborate and sophisticated version of the old spoils system adapted to the machinery of the administrative state. When it comes to currying favors, Congressmen know how to home in on programs under their committee's jurisdiction to extract what they want in terms of policy direction or special treatment, and there is enough boodle in a nearly \$3 trillion federal budget to satisfy even the most rapacious pork-barreler. Likewise, when it comes to bashing bureaucrats, Congressmen have little trouble identifying vulnerable targets of opportunity. The federal government is so large, and its administrators so busy trying to execute often conflicting or ambiguous congressional instructions, that Congress can, like Little Jack Horner, stick in its thumb and pull out a plum almost at random. The modern oversight investigation, which has less to do with substance than with conducting a dog-and-pony show for the benefit of a scandal-hungry media, has become a staple of the contemporary administrative state. And it almost always rounds to Congress's political benefit, for the simple reason that the exercise carries little if any downside risk. But political theater of this sort, however profitable it may be to particular representatives, is a far cry from the deliberative function that the framers hoped would be the defining characteristic of the legislative process.

It is an open question, to be sure, whether anything so large as the current federal establishment can be reasonably managed, and it is something of a miracle that it works at

all. Even so, Congress would do itself and the nation an enormous favor if it devoted more time to perfecting the legislative art, which includes paying serious attention to the policy coherence and consequences of its delegated legislative authority. In general, however, Congress has little political motive or (given its internal dispersal of power to committees and sub-committees) institutional capacity for substantive evaluation of the many programs it enacts and ostensibly oversees. It complains endlessly about the administrative state's inefficiency and arbitrariness, but compounds the problem by creating new agencies and programs in response to political urgencies. As it does so, it takes care to protect its own prerogatives even as it denies to the executive the requisite authority to control the administrative system.

This reluctance to vest the president with control has sometimes expressed itself in the form of independent agencies (independent, that is, of the president), which mock the idea of separated powers by vesting legislative, executive, and judicial functions in the same institution. Consider Boston University law professor Gary Lawson's provocatively compelling description of the Federal Trade Commission, which typifies the workings of the system as a whole:

The Commission promulgates substantive rules of conduct. The Commission then considers whether to authorize investigations into whether the Commission's rules have been violated. If the Commission authorizes an investigation, the investigation is conducted by the Commission, which reports its findings to the Commission. If the Commission thinks that the Commission's findings warrant an enforcement action, the Commission issues a complaint. The Commission's complaint that a Commission rule has been violated is then prosecuted by the Commission and adjudicated by the Commission. This Commission adjudication can either take place before the full Commission or before a semi-autonomous Commission administrative law judge. If the Commission chooses to adjudicate before an administrative law judge rather than before the Commission and the decision is adverse to the Commission, the Commission can appeal to the Commission. If the Commission ultimately finds a violation, then, and only then, the affected private party can appeal to an Article III court. But the agency decision, even before the bona fide Article III tribunal, possesses a very strong

presumption of correctness on matters both of fact and of law.

This pattern has become an accepted feature of the modern administrative state, so much so that, as Lawson notes, it scarcely raises eyebrows. Presidents and Congress long ago accommodated themselves to its political exigencies, as has the Supreme Court, which since the 1930s has never come close to questioning independent agencies' constitutional propriety.

Raiding Executive Authority

WHEN DEALING WITH THE EXECUTIVE branch as such, Congress frequently delegates and retains legislative authority at the same time. It does so, *inter alia*, through burdensome or unconstitutional restrictions on the exercise of presidential discretion, which it inserts in authorizing legislation, appropriations bills, or, sometimes, even in committee report language. It has also contrived a host of other devices to hamper executive control. For many decades, for example, it indulged broad delegations (e.g., "The Secretary shall have authority to issue such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act"), but as the number of agencies expanded and as delegated regulatory authority began to bite influential constituencies, Congress responded by imposing (variously) two-House, one-House, or in some cases even committee vetoes over agency action. Although the Supreme Court declared most legislative vetoes to be unconstitutional in *INS v. Chadha* (1983), Congress has improvised additional measures to second-guess the operations of the executive branch.

Confirmation hearings in the Senate, for example, are increasingly used to extract important policy concessions from prospective executive appointees, who learn very quickly that while the president is their nominal boss, Congress expects to be placated and, failing that, knows how to make their lives miserable. To underscore this point, in addition to the omnipresent threat of oversight hearings, Congress has enacted extensive "whistle-blower" legislation and created inspector-general offices for every department and agency, which operate as semi-demi-hemi-quasi-independent congressional envoys within the executive branch. For a time (until Bill Clinton got caught in the web), Congress was also enamored of special counsels, empowering them by legislation to investigate and prosecute alleged executive malfeasance, and at the same time ensuring that their activities were not only beyond the president's authority to control, but beyond the Congress's and the courts' as well. (Demonstrating that

the separation of powers in our time is more honored in the breach than the observance, the Supreme Court sustained the legislation with only one dissent.)

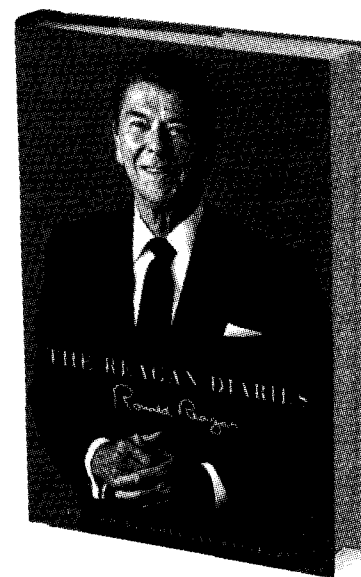
One may say by way of summary that Congress has, without fully realizing it, succumbed to Wilson's plan to eviscerate the separation of powers. It has failed to realize it in part because the administrative state's growth has occurred gradually; in part because it has learned how to profit politically by the change; and in part because it has convinced itself that conducting guerilla raids against executive authority is the most beneficial expression of the legislative function.

Taming the Administrative State

PRESIDENTS HAVE CHAFED UNDER congressional controls, rightly complaining that they interfere both with their constitutional powers and their ability to make the administrative state reasonably efficient and politically accountable. They have responded with various bureaucratic and legal weapons of their own. These include a greatly expanded Executive Office of the President (in effect, a bureaucracy that seeks to impose policy direction and managerial control over other executive bureaucracies), a massive surge in the use of executive orders, and increasing reliance on signing statements reserving the president's right not to enforce legislation he considers to be unconstitutional. Ever since the New Deal, and growing proportionately with the size of the federal establishment, a good deal of White House energy has been devoted to trying to manage and direct the administrative state—and to reminding Congress in diverse ways that the Constitution provides for only one chief executive. But modern presidents, like the modern Congress, have also succumbed to the lure of Wilson's theory concerning the separation of powers. They clearly enjoy the prospect of becoming the principal focal point for national policy, but once in office soon discover that the mantle of plebiscitary leadership can be assumed only at great cost. Unlike Congress, presidents remain politically and legally accountable for the administrative state's behavior. In order to execute their office as their constitutional oath demands, they must pay serious attention to the separation of powers in ways that Congress does not.

Presidents sometimes win and sometimes lose in their struggles with Congress, but each new contest only serves to compound the constitutional muddle that now surrounds the separation of powers, a muddle made all the more confusing by the Supreme Court's Janus-faced rulings in major cases, which also bear

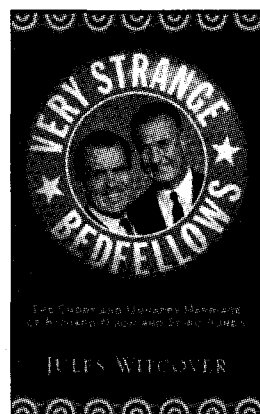
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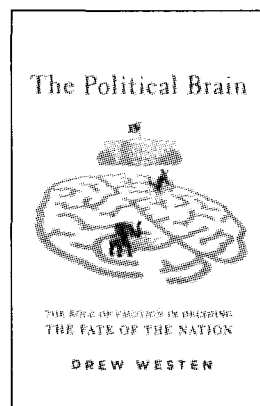
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the mark of the political revolution launched by Wilson's indictment of the structural Constitution. On a practical level, presidents have only modest gains to show for their continuing efforts to manage big government. Overall, when it comes to controlling the administrative state, the operative slogan might well be "Congress Won't and the President Can't." So much for Wilson's vision of the rational ordering of public policy through neutral expertise under the benign guidance of inspired presidents working in cooperation with Congress. Wilson dealt the separation of powers a mortal blow without understanding the full implications of what he had wrought. Without a vigorously enforced, reasonably bright-line distinction between the kinds of powers exercised by the different branches, the very presidency he hoped to create has been frustrated in its ability to execute coherent policy, or to manage those charged with fleshing out its details. For its part, Congress as a whole is even less interested today in deliberating about the coherence of national policy than it was when Wilson inveighed against its parochialism and committee structure in the late 19th century. And, it may be added, with each passing year the administrative state whose birth Wilson midwived becomes increasingly harder for any of the branches, jointly or severally, to control.

Having it Both Ways

LIBERALS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY HAPPY with the present state of affairs, but their enthusiasm for big government leaves them little choice but to support expansive presidential authority; it is the only available instrument capable of seeing to it that their desired social reforms are carried out. They encourage Congress to create or expand progressive programs, and generally applaud congressional bashing of bureaucrats (especially when the targets come from the opposite end of the political spectrum); but they do not otherwise wish to see Congress heavily involved in the business of directing public administration, for they rightly suspect that when Congress does so, the likely beneficiary will be some private interest rather than the public good. As for presidential direction and control of policy, liberals tend to favor executive discretion when Democrats occupy the Oval Office, but are generally dubious about it when exercised by Republican incumbents. Like Al Gore, they're in favor of reinventing government so long as it doesn't disestablish or interfere with favored agencies or programs.

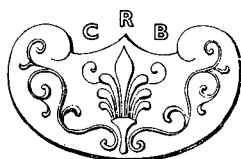
Liberals, in short, will complain about the administrative state's inefficiency and unwieldiness, and while they would no doubt like it to

work better they haven't a clue about how to reform it—other than by tinkering with its machinery at the margins. In truth, liberals have no desire for systemic change. They do not wish to reduce government's scope; and they certainly do not wish to revive the old Constitution's structural distinctions that separate the branches of government by function, for that, too, might diminish or eliminate many of the cherished programs they spent so many decades creating. The era of big government may be over, but only in Bill Clinton's rhetoric; big government itself is here to stay, as is the constitutional confusion that surrounds the separation of powers and threatens to extinguish its purposes altogether.

Although liberals generally applaud the demise of 18th-century constitutional strictures when it comes to domestic policy, they are not above extolling the old Constitution's virtues in foreign and national security affairs. The late Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., surely the model of 20th-century high-toned liberal sentiment if ever there was one, raised the execution of this intellectual two-step to a fine art form. He began his scholarly career by discovering in Andrew Jackson's administration a pre-incarnation of Franklin Roosevelt's plebiscitary presidency. Later, in his multi-volume hagiography of the New Deal, he defended the expansion of unfettered executive discretion in domestic affairs as a necessary concomitant of the burgeoning administrative state. In foreign affairs as well, Schlesinger praised FDR's aggressive use of executive power, not only during World War II (which is understandable enough), but also in the pre-war years (which is more debatable). Schlesinger took a similar tack in his praise of John F. Kennedy, who in Schlesinger's eyes was a kind of reincarnation of FDR. Then came Vietnam, Watergate, and the assorted excesses of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, as a result of which the presidential powers Schlesinger had previously celebrated suddenly became harbingers of imperial pretension. The imperial presidency motif disappeared once Jimmy Carter came into office, only to resurface periodically and vociferously during the Reagan years. It disappeared yet again while Bill Clinton held the office, and reappeared like clockwork in criticism of George W. Bush's anti-terrorism policies.

Schlesinger's personal tergiversations to the side, his ambivalence about executive power is a perfect measure of the modern liberals' dilemma: they want a chief executive capaciousy adorned with constitutional discretion when it comes to pushing government to carry out their social and economic agenda, but sound constitutional alarms when their own theory of presidential power gets applied to the execution of

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foreign and national security policies they do not like. That constitutional theory is sometimes bent to short-term policy preferences is hardly novel or shocking. But there is a deeper constitutional problem here as well, arising from liberals' embrace of Wilsonian theory. One simply can't have it both ways when it comes to the Constitution's grant of executive power—a small presidency for foreign affairs, but a large one for domestic affairs. If anything, a stronger case can be made the other way around: the vesting clause, the take-care clause, and the oath of office are common to both cases, but in war-related matters the president has an additional claim of authority stemming from his powers as commander in chief.

Conservatism and Executive Power

NOT SO LONG AGO, CONSERVATIVES might have been accused of harboring a similar inconsistency. For a long time, they were deeply suspicious of the executive branch, correctly seeing in its growth the dangers that flowed inexorably from the Wilsonian revolution in political thought—a notable increase in presidential caprice and demagoguery, and a notable increase as well in the government's size, driven by the engine of the plebiscitary presidency. The memory of FDR's arguable abuses of executive power remained deeply etched in the conservative memory for the better part of three decades. Well into the 1960s conservatives remained congressional partisans, having bought into the academic consensus—ironically, a consensus Wilson also helped to create—that the Constitution meant to establish legislative dominance. There was a second, more immediate, ideological reason: Congress, precisely because it represented a federated nation in all its diversity and complexity, was less likely to embrace utopian liberal schemes or an expansive federal establishment. Willmoore Kendall, the resident political theorist at *National Review* in its early days, was justly famous for his 1960 essay on "The Two Majorities," the central argument of which was (a) that a regime of presidential supremacy was not the government America's framers fought for; and (b) that Congress, in its geographically and culturally distributed collectivity, was a better and more legitimate expression of democratic sentiment than could be found in the modern plebiscitary

presidency. (Kendall was at least half-right. His essay is in any event a remarkable exercise in good old-fashioned political science, published before the behaviorists took hold of the profession. Warts and all, it remains an engrossing and rewarding read.)

In the year before Kendall's essay appeared, James Burnham, another important *National Review* editor with impressive academic credentials, published *Congress and the American Tradition*, an extended paean to the framers' wisdom in elevating congressional power to preeminence. Burnham's argument, like Kendall's, was designed in part to encourage Congress to become more aggressive in checking what Burnham saw as a dangerous trend toward executive self-aggrandizement and arbitrariness. The book, however, was as much a lament as a prescription for reform, for even as he wrote Burnham feared that Congress had already lost its edge as a countervailing force against the exponential growth of government in general and executive power in particular.

Nowadays, of course, *National Review* and most conservatives have become strong supporters of unitary executive powers, particularly in foreign and national security policy. The change appears to have begun during the late 1960s, when the execution of the Cold War took a bad turn in Vietnam. Conservatives certainly had no love for Lyndon Johnson or anything resembling his Great Society, but they realized that a vigorous executive, armed with as much discretion as could decently be allowed, was essential to keeping the Communists at bay. Congress, hitherto the collective repository of conservative wisdom (including quasi-isolationist tendencies), could no longer be counted on to defend the West. The Kendall-Burnham argument lost favor.

Such reservations as conservatives once had about presidential power on the domestic front became decidedly secondary to the overarching goal of deflating the Communist threat. For the most part, those reservations have not been reasserted, but not because conservatives came to embrace Wilson's general theory of history or of the state; rather, conservatives reluctantly resigned themselves to the fact that the administrative state is more or less here to stay. They would prefer, of course, smaller government, but as long as big government remains the order of the day, conservatives argue that the only way to make it

reasonably efficient and politically accountable is to vest the president with sufficient authority to run it. On the conservative side, then, there is a rough symmetry between their position regarding presidential power at home and abroad.

War Measures

NOT EVERYONE ON THE RIGHT SHARES this disposition, and President Bush's mismanagement of the Global War on Terror (if that's what the administration still calls it) has prompted some conservative thinkers to revisit the arguments advanced by Kendall and Burnham and to reassert the case for congressional authority over war-making. In this, they have plenty of company from liberals, who are dusting off their copies of Anti-Federalist tracts, Max Farrand's *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, and other primary source material on the framers' and ratifiers' intent.

But letting go of Kendall and Burnham is a lot easier for most conservatives than letting go of Wilson is for liberals. Much of the activity of the political science profession, as well as of the history profession, rests on the philosophical and political premises that made Woodrow Wilson famous and to which he devoted so much of his academic life. One takes a certain perverse pleasure these days in watching liberals wrap themselves in the arguments of James Madison (or at least the Madison who, in 1793, argued for the executive's limited role in foreign policy). One suspects they will not go much further into Madison's political thought than is necessary to bash George W. Bush or anyone else who supports expanded executive power in the war on terrorism—especially the "surge" in Iraq, military trials for the enemy combatants housed in Guantanamo, and the use of NSA intercepts. The Madison of 1793, and others from the republic's early days who were suspicious of executive authority, have their uses to Bush's opponents at the present hour, but liberals will not wish to carry their arguments so far as to undercut Wilson's justification for the modern presidency or his general indictment of the old Constitution's principles and structure: the entire liberal enterprise depends on holding on to that sacred Wilsonian bastion.

Michael M. Uhlmann teaches American politics and law at Claremont Graduate University.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Who Really Cares: America's Charity Divide—Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why it Matters, by Arthur C. Brooks. Basic Books, 256 pages, \$26

With a charming mix of gentle humor and hard data, Arthur Brooks's fine new book attacks what the author calls "one of the greatest political hypocrisies of our time," namely, "the pious sloganeering about liberals in America being more compassionate than conservatives." Brooks, a Syracuse University professor of public administration, demonstrates that not just religious people but religious *conservatives* give far more of their time, talent, and treasure than do their secular and liberal neighbors. But *Who Really Cares* is not about politics, at least in the conventional sense. Brooks never advocates a cause, party, or policy, though he does criticize government disincentives to charitable giving. He also highlights charitable organizations (like New York's Common Cents) that encourage personal responsibility and emphasize the enormous benefits that giving brings...to givers. The book's main accomplishment is to show that America is a land of charity in ways that extend beyond bureaucratic programs—ways drawn from culture and especially religion. In the face of the scientific, strategic, and even venture philanthropists who disparage charity for relying on individuals instead of administrative "experts," Brooks elevates charity back to its place of honor, not as something to beg for or be embarrassed by, but as a virtue, one that requires cultivation to survive.

—Albert Keith Whitaker
Boston College Center
on Wealth and Philanthropy

Wonderlust: Ruminations on Liberal Education, by Michael Davis. St. Augustine's Press, 208 pages, \$23

This is the instructive and even edifying saga of a typically atypical American boy: born mid-20th century to Communist parents, almost in a log cabin almost in Troy; growing up catching frogs, playing baseball, and reading Jack London and Charles Dickens; conceiving an aspiration to be either a president or a physicist—either one, because they both "somehow dealt with everything." Then his life plans were derailed by three students of Leo Strauss: Allan Bloom at

Cornell who attracted him to wonder; Richard Kennington from Penn State who showed him wonder in action; and Seth Benardete, who engaged him in 22 years of wonderful conversation, which in its own unexpected and astonishing way somehow dealt with everything.

True, it's not strictly speaking a saga. It's a collection of seventeen lectures, presentations, or memorials, from the past 30 years, during which Michael Davis, while teaching philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College, has on various pretexts and occasions been invited, obliged, or inspired to hold forth outside the classroom. His formal topics range from Aeschylus and Plato to Leo Strauss and Saul Bellow, with Shakespeare, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and the like (is that possible!) in between. These are, as advertised, ruminations—not discourses or treatises or chapters—and Davis invites the reader to consider the character and virtues of the genre. The shortest is a few pages, the longest (on Strauss) about 25 pages. Each rumination does have liberal education in the neighborhood and wonderlust, or the love of awakening to the love of wisdom, in the front yard. And books, or rather great works, usually of the written word, are everywhere—cherished by the painstakingly close study of them, because they have the greatest things to teach us.

—Christopher Flannery

The Regensburg Lecture, by James V. Schall. St. Augustine's Press, 180 pages, \$20

This slim volume reprints two expanded essays by Georgetown government professor Fr. James Schall languidly reflecting on Pope Benedict XVI's headline-making lecture from last fall (also included). As a bonus, the book adds an essay by Schall on the term "Islamofascism."

In the setting of a university, a place designed for inquiry without fear of reprisal, the pontiff asked the world: is God reasonable? If He is reasonable (or reason itself, as John the Evangelist wrote), then we can employ what we know by reason to know something about God and what he commands. For example, Benedict said, because we can know terrorism is evil, we know it cannot be commanded by the true God. Nevertheless, many Muslims have taught and continue to teach that Allah is pure chaotic

will, able to be anything or to command anything no matter what the contradiction.

The pope laments that the contemporary West has rejected the Christian tradition, which teaches a harmony between Greek philosophy and biblical faith, and adopted instead modernity's narrowly conceived science, which is unable to inquire into the highest and most important questions of how to live well. Without engaging these questions, we cannot refute challenges to the good life either at home or abroad. And yet, those who reject reason still must give an account of themselves, writes Schall, which is itself an appeal to reason.

—John B. Kienker

Perspectives on Politics in Shakespeare, edited by John A. Murley and Sean D. Sutton. Lexington Books, 276 pages, \$80.00 (cloth), \$29.95 (paper)

This is an impressive collection by some of the most gifted political thinkers writing on Shakespeare today. After chapters by Paul Cantor and John Alvis on the English history plays (with special attention to *Henry V*), and David Nichols on the comedies, the volume offers close readings of particular plays, with Mera Flaumenhaft on *As You Like It*, Pamela Jensen on *Measure for Measure*, and Leo Paul de Alvarez on *Troilus and Cressida*. The final essay is a three-part rumination by George Anastaplo on the ways in which Shakespeare used English history, and the ways in which three readers—Elizabeth I, Abraham Lincoln, and John Wilkes Booth—used (or misused) the plays.

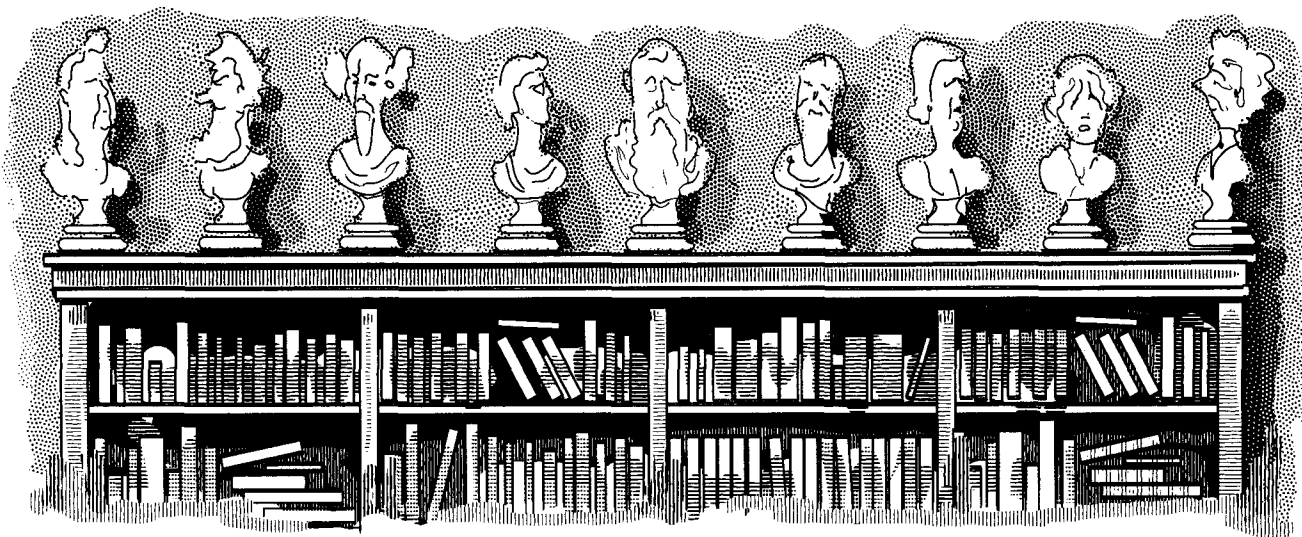
The collection is unified by two themes: the political challenges and possibilities posed by modernity, and the significance of Christianity. Cantor, Nichols, Jensen, and de Alvarez explore how Shakespeare's political thought was influenced by, and responded to, Machiavelli's; Alvis, Flaumenhaft, and Anastaplo raise similar questions indirectly. Although the scholars disagree about the extent of Machiavelli's influence, they agree that Shakespeare ultimately parted ways with him—especially in regard to the pursuit of justice and the institution of marriage—due largely to the Bard's more favorable assessment of Christianity.

—Germaine Paulo Walsh
Texas Lutheran University

Book Review by Joseph Tartakovsky

PITH AND PEN

The New Oxford Book of Literary Anecdotes, edited by John Gross.
Oxford University Press, 400 pages, \$29.95



THE ANECDOTE IS GENERALLY LIGHTER than a parable and weightier than a joke, less misleading than rumor and more entertaining than testimony. It is a story whose subject cannot be ghosts, fish, or cock-and-bull, but only people, preferably famous ones. Finally, it must be neat, pointed, and self-contained. The appeal of the literary anecdote, John Gross tells us in his *New Oxford Book* of them, is that "if the writer is someone whom we have read, or whose legend has touched our imagination, we are likely to bring a whole complex of feelings to bear on the story." Here, for instance, as recounted by a biographer, is Matthew Arnold, supreme critic of the Victorian Age, quizzing children in his job as school inspector:

"Well, my little man...and how do you spell dog?" "Please sir, d-o-g." "Capital, very good indeed. I couldn't do it better myself. And now let us go a little further, and see if we can spell cat." (Chorus excitedly,) "C-A-T." "Now, this is really excellent."

It is not easy to have a supreme critic in a literary age as fragmented and anti-heroic as ours, but John Gross perhaps comes as close as one can. He is the distinguished author of *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* and *A Double Thread* (his charming memoir), the former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*,

and editor of *After Shakespeare* (an inexhaustible mine of great writers commenting on the poet), the *New Oxford Book of English Prose*, the *Oxford Book of Aphorisms*, and the *Oxford Book of Essays*. Now, in this anthology, he arranges over 800 anecdotes about 338 writers into 353 delightful pages.

The subjects of Gross's anecdotes are largely canonic authors writing in English. They span more than six centuries, from Geoffrey Chaucer, fined two shillings by a London court for striking a friar, to J.K. Rowling, granted an injunction by a London court against thieves of an unreleased Harry Potter novel. We see authors as precocious striplings (a four-year-old Thomas Macaulay reassures a lady who spilled coffee on him that "the agony is abated"), and dying geniuses (Jonathan Swift, his mind almost gone, mumbles in a final glimmer of self-knowledge, "I am a fool"). They do everything from stirring pots in their kitchens (Emily Dickinson) to killing their wives (William Burroughs).

With Gross amiably at our elbow, we drift into a London club as Anthony Trollope scribbles away, and slip into Thomas Hobbes's chamber as he sings in bed each night to fortify his health. Reclining under a plum tree on a spring morning, John Keats writes a few lines to a nightingale and tosses them aside; only a friend's reverence saves them to become the classic ode. Henry David Thoreau overhears an aunt complain about his ignoring a book she

gave him: "Think of it! He stood half an hour today to hear the frogs croak, and he wouldn't read the life of Chalmers."

Jane Austen's loyal readers will enjoy her reply to a retainer of the House of Saxe Cobourg who had presumed to suggest a theme in return for possible patronage:

You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that [she had just published *Emma*], I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

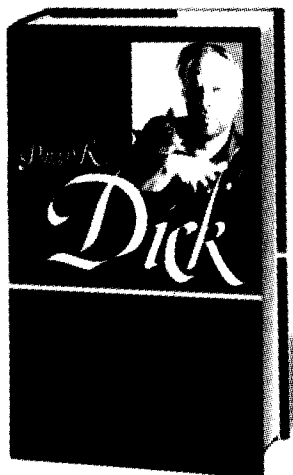
We love P.G. Wodehouse—and rush out to buy twelve more of his books—when he parries, in his inimitable way, a correspondent pen-named

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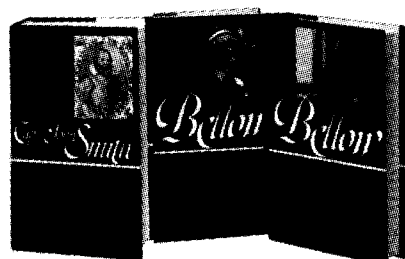
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"Indignant" who considers him overrated:

I do not wish to labour this point, but I must draw Indignant's attention to a letter in *The Times* from Mr Verrier Elwin, who lives at Patangarth, Mandla District, India. Mr Elwin speaks of a cow which came into his bungalow one day and ate his copy of *Carry On, Jeeves*, "selecting it from a shelf which contained, among other works, books by Galsworthy, Jane Austen and T.S. Eliot." Surely a rather striking tribute.

We expect our writers to have lively imaginations, bordering at times on lunacy, and they do not disappoint. Ben Jonson once "consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he hath seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination." William Blake, in the stillness of his garden one evening, spied "a procession of creatures of the size and colour of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared." A fairy funeral, he explained to a woman in his company.

This volume lets us eavesdrop as writers of the first rank judge their fellows. Wordsworth thought Byron "somewhat cracked." J.S. Mill choked with emotion when he read aloud Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to Liberty." The great European novelist of the sea was not overwhelmed by his American counterpart:

[Joseph Conrad and I] talked of books and, expecting him to be interested in Melville's *Moby Dick*, I mentioned it, and Conrad burst into a furious denunciation of it. "He knows nothing of the sea. Fantastic, ridiculous," he said. When I mentioned that the work was symbolical and mystical: "Mystical my eye! My old boots are mystical."

Gross allows us to glimpse not only literary men and women themselves, but the manners, hierarchies, and sensibilities of the vanished worlds in which they moved. A poet named James Hogg drank too much one night and "fairly convulsed" a dinner party by addressing Sir Walter Scott's wife by her first name. Samuel Pepys, his coach robbed at gunpoint, asked the bandits to "be civil to the ladies and not to frighten them." Closer to our liberated times, Mrs. D.H. Lawrence recalls her husband saying, "Frieda, if people really knew what you were like, they would strangle you." "Did he say that angrily," someone asked. "No—very quietly, after several minutes deep thought."

Should the number of anecdotes allotted to a writer be proportionate to his greatness? Shakespeare gets only four, as few as Samuel Beckett. On the other hand, if proportion held, half the volume would be Shakespeare's. The writers in this book quote him with the reverence clergymen reserve for Scripture. And yet I can't recall an expression of bardolatry that rivals this one, from Frank Harris (1856-1931), a journalist who wrote *The Man Shakespeare*:

[D]uring a lull in conversation at one of his luncheon parties, the conversation shifted to homosexuality. A great hush descended upon the room at the mention of a subject that, in those days, was taboo. Harris, however, thundered on in his powerful basso: "Homosexuality? No, I know nothing of the joys of homosexuality. My friend Oscar can no doubt tell you all about that." Further silence, even more profound. Harris continued: "But I must say that if Shakespeare asked me, I would have to submit."

None but the most intrepid literary explorers will have encountered more than a few of Gross's anecdotes. His sources are often obscure or out-of-print biographies, miscellanies, diaries, letters, and volumes with titles like *I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson*. Half of the anecdotes, which average about a paragraph in length, seem to come from dinner parties, if not in London then in New York. Many are embellished or expanded (though not by the editor); so much the better. They range from poignant to quaint to heart-breaking, but most are humorous. One of the book's delights is the language; the sources are full of curious old usages and beauties of diction and phrasing.

This book could not be the work of a typical assistant professor of literary theory, specializing in semiotics. It could only be produced by a man of letters of the old school, who cherishes decorum and decency in literature as in life. In choosing so many anecdotes that capture writers' characters in a glance, Gross shows his biographer's skill, but also his seasoned taste and judgment as a critic. Ezra Pound and Harold Pinter and their ilk come off poorly in this book. The likes of Henry James and Samuel Johnson command our admiration. As Lionel Trilling said of that famous Victorian school inspector, "[T]o analyze the good from the bad, foster the good, diminish the bad—this will be Arnold's program of criticism." It seems also to be Mr. Gross's program of anthology.

Joseph Tartakovsky is assistant editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*.

BETWEEN RIDDLE AND REVELATION

Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man, by Barbara Reynolds.
Shoemaker & Hoard, 466 pages, \$35

BARBARA REYNOLDS, A DISTINGUISHED Italianist who has taught for years at Cambridge University, is well known in Dante circles and beyond. Her translation of Ariosto is simply a classic. As a *dantista*, she translated 13 cantos of *Paradiso* that were left unfinished by the premature death of her friend and occasional student Dorothy L. Sayers, who is still known to her admirers as DLS. One infers that the conversation between these two impressive women continues, as it were, beyond the grave. Sayers started her career writing detective novels but eventually gave up her tales of the idiosyncratic Lord Peter Wimsey, master sleuth, collector of ancient manuscripts, and connoisseur of Bach and Scarlatti. Under the influence of C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, the Blackfriar Kenelm Foster, and, finally, Barbara Reynolds, Sayers turned into a leading, imaginative scholar of Dante.

She pursued her new intellectual role with the zeal of a missionary. To Sayers, Dante's poetry was a kind of miracle, transcending time and place to keep medieval wisdom alive in our war-ravaged modernity. Sayers's *The Mind of the Maker* (1941) argued that Christian theology, and especially Dante's feminine version of that theology, is the deepest mystery, far surpassing the adventures of her detective. This argumentum ad mysticum became the centerpiece of Reynolds's biography of Sayers, *The Passionate Intellect: Dorothy L. Sayers' Encounter with Dante* (1989), a remarkable work that combined biography and riddles. Reynolds grasped with great clarity Sayers's insight: in a novelistic riddle, however puzzling, you can hit upon a solution, especially if you follow the guideline of a thread given beforehand. A theological mystery (as with the mystery of a man's life), by contrast, places you in an uncharted region of unfathomable, labyrinthine complexities.

In her new book, which she calls a portrait of Dante, Reynolds writes with the confidence of a scholar who has attained an objective, de-romanticized standpoint on Dante and his world, and in the process she breaks new ground. She sheds light on some old textual cruxes, such as the meaning of Virgil's prophecy of the "veltro" (hound) in Hell. And with an impish smile, she suggests that Dante's visionary experiences, much like those of Aldous Huxley in the 20th century, were the result of mind-altering substances, a medieval variant of

LSD. Over 56 chapters corresponding to the 56 years of Dante's earthly life, she explores his political passions, his involvement in Florence's dangerous politics, his rhetorical poses and "showmanship" as a whole.

The interpretive disagreements between these two friends, leaving aside temperamental differences, reflect the persistence of two divergent rhetorical models: the mid-14th century, fairly fictional *Life of Dante* by Boccaccio, and the early 15th-century biography written by the Florentine historian and civil humanist, Leonardo Bruni. Boccaccio wanted to make novelistic sense of Dante's poetry and imagined his life as if it had been spent in unceasing service to the Muses. By contrast, Bruni rooted Dante's life in the reality of Florence's political and intellectual history. Barbara Reynolds's biography falls into Bruni's fold, though paradoxically she casts herself as a follower of Boccaccio, perhaps because unlike Bruni but like Boccaccio, she does not believe in the redemptive value of politics. In the process, she conveys a startling image of Dante's multifaceted personality—"the poet, the political thinker, the man." She rejects the view that finds in him a unified moral or philosophical or theological consciousness, and thus parts company with her old friend's unifying emphasis on the "mind of the maker."

THESE DIFFERENCES LIE AT THE HEART of the persistent fascination Dante exerts on contemporary readers. Nor is it likely that they can be erased, for they largely depend on the ambiguities in Dante's own self-dramatization. In the *Divine Comedy*, he casts himself as a mythical hero. Like the fictional heroes of old—Aeneas, Beowulf, Gilgamesh, Roland—he is larger than life. At the same time, however, we know more about his actual biography than we do, say, about the lives of his poetic peers, Homer and Shakespeare. However meager, some biographical details about Dante go unchallenged: he was married, had children, fought in the military campaign of Campaldino against the Aretines (June 1289), enrolled in a guild (1295), began a political career, craved recognition, was notoriously litigious, and in 1302, while on an embassy to the papal court and thanks to the maneuvers of Pope Boniface VIII, was exiled from his native city. In short, as a poet and citizen Dante comes across as so thoroughly human, so much a part of history

and so much like us, that to this day we want to get closer to him. The disparity between his ordinariness and his extraordinary visionary powers nourishes our fascination.

To get past this paradox, we might start from Dante's exile, which lasted till his death in Ravenna in 1321. Despite its crushing fatality, it functioned in many ways as a blessing in disguise. It made it easy for him to transcend the tragic particularisms of local, Florentine history, and gave him a way out of the darkness of partisan poses. What's more, the exile opens a window on Dante's education, which he got first at the knee of humanists, such as Brunetto Latini, and, a little later, from theologians, such as the unorthodox Franciscan friar Olivi. It was no doubt Olivi who, while teaching at Santa Croce in Florence from 1289 to 1297, helped shape Dante's thought, providing a critical perspective on Latini's Ciceronian and Florence-based political paradigms as well as a visionary warning against the "carnal" Church, reluctant to strip herself of material wealth and purify herself into the spiritual Church at the end of time.

Barbara Reynolds's intellectual biography does justice to most of these questions, evoking the constellation of thinkers figuring in Dante's consciousness. These disparate figures allow her to argue that Dante moves in the uncertain boundary between the physical and the metaphysical, the immanent and the transcendent. It is within this context that her astounding suggestion, a guess really, about Dante's mystical vision arising from mind-altering drugs, makes some—although not much—sense. The idea implies, of course, without defending, the skeptical notion that there is no such thing as a transcendent experience. One wonders, however, how Dorothy Sayers, who well understood Dante's sense of beauty as a power shattering the dualism of object and subject, would view her dear friend's impoverishing, though attention-grabbing, suggestion. DLS would probably say that there's always a riddle and that a true riddle cannot be solved. Barbara Reynolds would probably agree. But neither of them, alas, would even consider the possibility that Dante is not merely some kind of mystic.

Giuseppe Mazzotta is Sterling Professor of Italian at Yale University and chairman of the department. He is the current president of the Dante Society of America.

LORD HAVE MERCY

God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, by Christopher Hitchens.
Twelve, 320 pages, \$24.99



EVERY TALENTED WRITER IS ENTITLED to be a bore on at least one subject, but where religion is concerned Christopher Hitchens abuses the privilege. For years now, he has supplemented his prolific punditry and criticism with a stream of anti-theistic diatribes, and now these rivers of vituperation have pooled into a single volume, an *omnium gatherum* of God-bashing (although he insists on using the lower-case “g” throughout) that exceeds most of its predecessors in the felicity of its prose, but matches them in the tedium of its arguments. “I have been writing this book all my life,” Hitchens declares in the conclusion to *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, “and intend to keep on writing it.” One hopes that someone near and dear to him will have the courage to firmly suggest that he stop.

The book has been written with two main purposes in mind: to show that all religions are false, and to prove that their effects are near-universally pernicious. In each case, Hitchens’s argument proceeds principally by anecdote, and at his best he is as convincing as that particular style allows, which is to say not terribly. He succeeds in demonstrating that many faiths are frauds and many prophets have been fakers, that believers commit all sorts of terrible crimes and that Buddhists are no more pacific than Southern Baptists, and that the Bible is neither a work of academic history nor a biology textbook. Then again, I was convinced of these points already, and hoped that Hitchens would pick a fight on more contested territory, such as the origin and nature of spiritual experience, which seems a more likely source for man’s persistent religiosity than, say, the fear of thunderstorms or the stubborn refusal to crack open *The Origin of Species*. But like most apologists for atheism, he evinces little interest in the topic of religion

as it is actually lived, preferring to stick to the safer ground of putting the godly in the dock and cataloguing their crimes against humanity.

In this vein, he is exhaustive but largely unpersuasive. I remain unconvinced, for instance, that religious practice has no significant effect on moral character, though all I have to support my intuition is a heap of academic studies suggesting that churchgoing boosts marital happiness, private generosity, and various other indicators of a life well lived, while Hitchens has the devastating rebuttal that Robert Ingersoll, the noted freethinker, was a better husband and father than the Catholic Evelyn Waugh. Similarly, I’m unpersuaded that the Catholic Church’s stance on birth control has been a major factor in the spread of AIDS around the world, though again I’m merely relying on statistics—African infection rates, for instance, are highest in heavily Protestant countries; most studies suggest that serious religious practice correlates with lower rates of risky sexual behavior, even among people already infected with HIV—while Hitchens has the irrefutable power of anecdote on his side, specifically a few dumb statements about condoms from Third World churchmen.

I’m also unconvinced that male circumcision is quite the species of totalitarianism that *God Is Not Great* makes it out to be, though I am perhaps suffering from what Hitchens, in his Marxist phase, would have described as “false consciousness.” Nor do I believe that the doctrine of hell has wrecked quite so many millions of childhoods as he claims (though he does have citations from James Joyce and Mary McCarthy on his side); or that religion has likewise ruined the act of coitus (a difficult thing to do, one might hazard) for untold numbers of believers; or that the difference between the Spanish Inquisition and the U.S. military chaplaincy is

a matter of degree and not of kind. Although Hitchens may be entirely correct that an atheist need “never again confront the impressive faith of an Aquinas or a Maimonides,” because faith of “the sort that can stand up at least for a while in a confrontation with reason” no longer exists, I wish he had risked the confrontation, instead of writing an entire book about religion that includes exactly two quotations from religious intellectuals born since 1800, both taken from the same C.S. Lewis pamphlet.

IT MIGHT BE ARGUED THAT THE BREVITY OF the book and the amount of ground it covers should excuse the less-than-rigorous fashion in which it advances its more controversial arguments. But the demands of brevity should clarify and hone, whereas Hitchens manages to be both short and sloppy. To dispense with both the Old and New Testament in 25 pages is a difficult task, but if he was limited by considerations of length he might have found better evidence for the fraudulence of the Christian witness than, say, the less-than-earthshattering revelation that non-canonical gospels circulated in the centuries after Christ; or the news that the well-known passage in the Gospel of John dealing with the woman taken in adultery was not part of the original Johannine text; or the self-evidently specious observation that the New Testament authors “cannot agree on anything of importance.” Hitchens might also have better disguised the fact that he seems to have consulted no New Testament authorities more distinguished than the latest publications from Elaine Pagels, the doyenne of the “lost gospels” industry, and Bart Ehrman, the ex-fundamentalist who abandoned Christianity once it became clear to him that there might have been actual human beings involved in the composition of its sacred texts.

Perhaps one should be grateful when Hitchens cites any authority at all, since his artful prose is forever rushing on to the insult and skipping the argument, and sometimes the facts as well. He claims that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* stars a "lead actor who was apparently born in Iceland or Minnesota," a jibe calculated to amuse anyone who's never set eyes on Jim Caviezel, the lead actor in question, who looks exactly like the dark-haired, dark-skinned Italian-Slovak-Irish mongrel he is. Of the Gospels themselves, Hitchens notes that "the book on which all four may possibly have been based, known speculatively to scholars as 'Q,' has been lost forever, which seems distinctly careless on the part of the god who is claimed to have 'inspired' it"—a good line that reveals at best a passing acquaintance with biblical scholarship, since the hypothetical Q is only envisioned as a source for Matthew and Luke, not Mark and certainly not John.

EVERY BOOK HAS ITS ERRORS, OF COURSE, but few are quite so tendentious in their interpretation of the facts they manage to get right. Like an overzealous Christian searching pagan texts for anything that could be construed as foreshadowing Christ's coming, Hitchens scours the record of man's inhumanities to man for any hint that they might have been motivated by piety, prophecy, or dogma. No atrocity has been committed and no tyranny established, if you believe his theocentric history of violence, that did not have religion at its root somehow.

This would seem a rather difficult case to make, since a cursory reading of history suggests that loyalty to one's kin, one's tribe, and one's nation—not to mention sundry political ideologies—has sparked at least as much violence as any theological controversy. But fortunately for Hitchens's polemic, religion is so woven into human affairs that nearly every war contains *some* religious element for his monomania to batten on. And perhaps some readers will even be persuaded by, for instance, his peculiar suggestion that the Hutu-on-Tutsi carnage in Rwanda had less to do with ethnic grievances and the pernicious legacy of Victorian Europe's racial theories than with some minor Marian visionaries, whose prophecies, which included dire and all-too-accurate predictions of imminent mass murder, were briefly co-opted by Hutu thugs.

More likely, though, the reader will come away unpersuaded of anything save the self-evident truth of the matter, which is that human beings, being a clannish and quarrelsome lot, tend to find all sorts of things to fight over, and that nearly every aspect of human affairs can serve as a powerful spur to actions both he-

roic and deplorable. So religion produces both Torquemada and Dorothy Day; philosophy spurs Socrates to die for truth and Heidegger to prostitute himself for Hitler; science cures polio and speeds our missiles on their way; the bonds of family provide the foundation for innumerable happy childhoods, but also for the Wars of the Roses. None of this is to excuse the crimes of religious believers; it's merely to suggest that the line between good and evil runs through every aspect of human affairs, and denouncing belief in God for poisoning the world is as absurd as denouncing "democracy" because it has empowered tyrants from Hitler down to Hugo Chavez, or "equality" because its partisans have included the Jacobins, the Khmer Rouge, and the KGB.

Of this last objection, at least, Hitchens seems well aware, and he devotes an entire chapter to arguing strenuously that both the Nazis and the Communists were *effectively* religious and *effectively* theocratic, their secular experiments poisoned by religion. But with this move he begins sawing off the very branch he occupies, since if faith tends to infect even secular politics, then what separates Hitchens from his religious enemies?

THE ABSENCE OF IDEOLOGY, HE WOULD doubtless claim, and the commitment to skepticism and humanism, "free thought" and above all Science. But Science is not a moral teacher, and Hitchens is nothing if not a moralist, passionately invested in such notions as universal human rights, the wastefulness of violence, the particular inviolability of children, and so forth. Where he finds these principles, I am uncertain, but then he seems to be perplexed as well, given how quickly his attempt to apply evolutionary theory to the thorny problem of abortion collapses into unfortunate-sounding appeals to "creative destruction" and "the pitilessness of nature."

This detour into Social Darwinism is mercifully brief, and for the most part Hitchens hews faithfully to Thomas Jefferson's famous attempt to carve all the miracles out of the Gospels and leave the ethical teaching intact. I do not mean to give offense in calling Hitchens a quasi-Christian moralist, but in his better moments that is what he plainly is—a true believer in the branch of the Enlightenment tradition that is epistemologically materialist but otherwise takes its cues from Christianity. The trouble is that this two-step contains a certain contradiction, which is why liberalism has tended to lurch in one direction or another ever since—toward a spineless relativism on the one hand or a scientific utopianism on the other, with New Testament morality the first thing to be jettisoned in either case.

HITCHENS'S OWN TEMPTATIONS LIE IN the latter direction. Though he casts himself as a chastened ex-Marxist, he slips all too easily into a boasting utopianism. There is the dream of near-immortality, thanks to "stupendous advances in medicine and life extension, derived from work on our elementary stem cells." There is the usual atheistic claptrap about how the "undreamed of vistas inside our own evolving cortex, in the farthest reaches of the known universe, and in the proteins and acids which constitute our nature" are a suitable replacement for the inspiration and consolation associated with religion. And inevitably, there is the fantasy of a sexual utopia, since "the divorce between the sexual life and fear, the sexual life and disease, and the sexual life and tyranny, can now at last be attempted, on the sole condition that we banish all religions from the discourse." (This last bit is the kind of nonsense that only an intellectual could believe—that *religion*, rather than biology and human nature, is responsible for making sex physically and emotionally perilous, or linking promiscuity with disease, or intertwining the personal and the political.)

At one point, summoning his readers to the salons and barricades of a new Age of Reason, Hitchens adds the caveat that "only the most naive utopian can believe that this new humane civilization will develop, like some dream of 'progress,' in a straight line." This sounds admirably humble, until you read the next sentence—"we have to first transcend our prehistory, and escape the gnarled hands which reach out to drag us back to the catacombs and the reeking altars"—and realize that the only people standing between us and this "new humane civilization" are the unenlightened types who don't agree with Christopher Hitchens about the ultimate purpose of human affairs.

We've heard this kind of talk before—transcending the past, building a new humane civilization, escaping the outworn moralities and metaphysics of yore—and its results have tended to be unhappy for those unfortunate enough to be identified with the "prehistory" that needs to be transcended. Perhaps a more modest utopianism will be less pernicious than its predecessors; perhaps Hitchens really means it when he protests, in between the insults, that he only dislikes religion because it won't leave him well enough alone. But there's nothing, either in recent history or in the pages of this smug, incurious book, to give one any confidence of that.

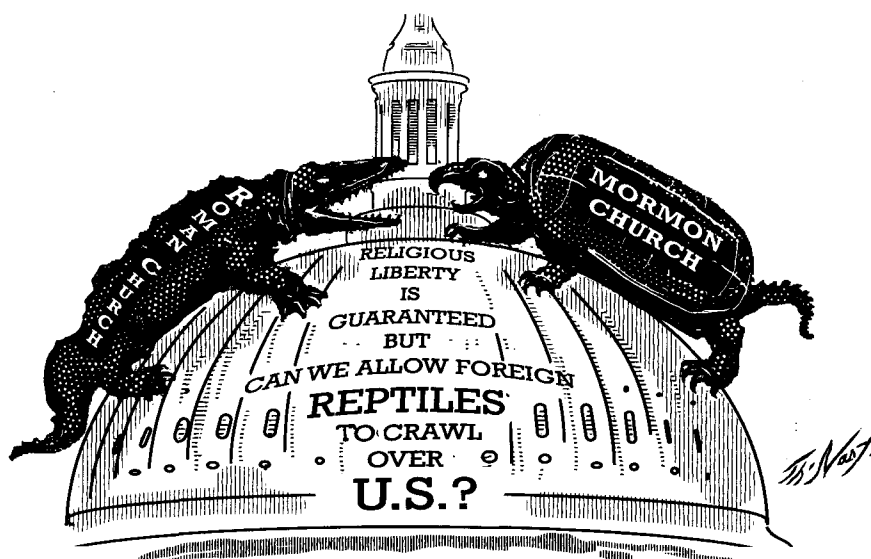
Ross Douthat is an associate editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Book Review by Howard F. Ahmanson, Jr.

GETTING RELIGION

Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem—and What We Should Do About It, by Noah Feldman.

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 320 pages, \$25 (cloth), \$14 (paper)



Cartoon after Thomas Nast's original work, published c.1875 in Harper's Weekly

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN American politics? Two extreme opinions battle each other in our culture wars. On one side are secularists who say that because America was the first modern nation without an established church, the founders intended this to be a secular republic. On the other side sit those who point to the centrality of Christianity in the lives of Americans from the founding era to today, and from that fact conclude that America has always been a Christian nation, albeit a non-denominational one.

In his new book, *Divided by God: America's Church-State Problem—and What We Should Do About It*, Noah Feldman, a professor at New York University's law school, reminds us that this problem has always been with us. Rather than conclude that it is therefore inherent in American politics, he thinks that he has a solution to it. As he sees it, there is nothing wrong with making religious arguments in public, or with public displays of religion—so long as the government does not fund them. He proposes a new bargain in which religious expression would be welcomed back into the public square, but government money would be banned from religious schools and charities (hence no vouchers or faith-based programs).

The trouble with Feldman's solution is that it ignores the history to be found in his book, and it misconstrues the peculiar requirements

of our form of government. Although he does not ignore the benefits America has reaped from having a religious citizenry, he spends more time discussing the political abuses of religion and the cut and thrust of America's religious politics. For example, he reminds readers that the First Amendment's guarantee that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" took shape as a mixture of political principle and calculation. James Madison hoped that it would solidify support for the new U.S. Constitution. Some of the states that approved that amendment had religious establishments they wished to protect from federal interference, and ratified the amendment for that very reason. In 1789, America did not have a religious establishment; it had several religious establishments of various kinds—in addition to some states without establishments. The First Amendment was a political compromise.

Feldman reminds us that when the people ratified the Constitution, and for several generations thereafter, no one thought there was anything wrong with students reading the Bible in school. When public schooling began to spread during Andrew Jackson's presidency, the Bible was a classroom staple. These schools were created not so much to prepare Americans to succeed economically, but to ensure that working-class citizens became educated, responsible

voters capable of maintaining the country's republican form of government. As part of this education in liberty, teachers insisted on a new, "nonsectarian" reading of the Bible in order to teach a common morality for citizenship.

THIS EFFORT TO TEACH A "NONSECTARIAN" Bible was problematic. Which version was non-sectarian? For Catholics, the Bible—and especially the King James Bible—was insufficient to convey a complete picture of what God asks of men. Feldman notes that when John Locke began to propose religious toleration in the 17th century, he excluded Roman Catholics, Muslims, and atheists from its protections—the last because they had no transcendent reason to be good, even if they were good; and the first two because they were potentially subjects of a foreign potentate, whether the Pope or the Caliph. (The U.S. acted similarly by outlawing certain forms of Shinto during World War II, because the Shintoists were worshiping the head of state of a country with which the United States was at war.)

As Catholics began to arrive in vast numbers to America's shores in the mid-19th century, their influx created a strain within the public schools. Learning from both Locke and their own Protestant forebears that Catholics could not be good citizens so long as they were "Papists," the schoolmasters sought to Americanize the new immigrants. The result was predictable.

Catholic Americans (and, Feldman could have added, Lutherans and the Dutch Reformed and German Reformed) began to organize their own schools, to educate their children in the context of their own religious doctrines. They also began to argue that if the state had an interest in the education of children, shouldn't it support these new schools as well? And if the state did not, weren't Catholics being unfairly taxed for schools they didn't use?

Meanwhile, evangelicals, liberal Protestants, and Unitarians joined with nativists to insist that government should not support any schools but its own. Tensions led to violent riots in Philadelphia in 1844. As Feldman points out:

The Bible wars of the mid-nineteenth century did not reflect any particularly deep religious faith on the part of the nativists who took to the streets. The Bible mattered as a symbol of American Protestantism and the republican ideology connected with it.... Loss of control over what was taught in the schools would be evidence of lost control over the public meaning of American life.

In short, America's Protestant majority drew a straight line between the basic Protestant idea that all Christians ought to read and reflect upon the Bible for themselves and American citizenship. Catholicism, as they understood it, taught that Christians should listen passively to the educated priestly class and the Church hierarchy. Catholics, for their part, protested that public education was a stalking horse for Protestantizing their children, and sought other means of education. Both sides saw that education was at once a religious and a political thing.

THIS FEUD BETWEEN PROTESTANTS AND Catholics is the context in which to understand secularism—defining morals without regard to God—which began to gain influence after the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. "The relegation of religion to the realm of personal spirituality, accompanied by a rejection of the Bible as a source of objective knowledge about the world," writes Feldman, constituted the "core" of late 19th-century American secularism. To gain a hearing for their unpopular views, secularists shrewdly "used the Catholic church, which had for so long dominated European Christianity, as a stand-in for religious belief more generally."

In this way, "[b]y making the Catholic church the main antagonist of science, the secularists defined an enemy that their Protestant audience already loved to hate." To gain ground in American politics, secularists sided with Protestants against Catholics; all the while they set precedents that they would later use against Protestantism itself. (Similarly, in the 20th century, Mexico drafted anticlerical laws against Catholics and then used them to restrict Protestants, and Turkey drafted laws to control Muslims that they then used to stifle Christians.) By the 20th century, many evangelicals began to think about church-state relations, and about science, in these secular terms. A related movement that Feldman calls "legal secularism" was developed not by secularists, but by a cultic faith known as the Jehovah's Witnesses, who thought that the new custom of saluting the American flag in schools was idolatrous.

Feldman doesn't give enough credit to the role of the Masonic movement in this process. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Masons taught American middle-class men that, regardless of what the church said, there were many paths to God, and inculcated in them a highly relativized, hyper-nonsectarian spirituality—but not a relativized morality until the 1960s—that was secular in fact, though not secularist.

THE BASIC PROBLEM REMAINED: WHAT, other than religion, could provide a common moral foundation for American citizens? And if "religion" was indispensable, which one or ones? After World War II, the answer was found in the idea of a generic biblical religion. Once the horror of the Holocaust came to light, Americans recoiled from its godless depravity. Facing a new atheistic enemy in the Cold War, the phrase "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance at the behest of the Knights of Columbus and "In God We Trust" became the national motto. But what God? A new term, "Judeo-Christian," was coined, going beyond the old non-sectarianism. It grew from the not implausible argument that the biblical religions inhabited a common moral universe. Protestants, Catholics, and Jews shared the same basic beliefs about human nature, sexual morality, and honesty and decency. It was precisely this moral consensus that came under attack in the 1960s, and remains under attack in today's culture wars.

Feldman seems puzzled by this outcome. Although "liberals have mostly been winning the culture war...conservatives have been win-

ning the war over institutions and...social policies." The upshot, he says, is "a contradiction, or rather a series of contradictions." He writes:

Victories by the legal secularists have removed religion from formal public spaces such as schools, at least during school hours. Successful efforts by values evangelicals have broken down once-strong institutional barriers between the state and organized religion, and have actually increased the degree of religious discourse in politics.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE REMAIN A religious people. And yet America's elite—at least its academic elite and those who listen to them—are evangelists for secularism. The secular elites control our law schools, and hence our courts. But the religious usually decide our elections. That analysis leads to Feldman's proposed solution: let religious people say all they want in public, even in political discussions, but let the rules stand that secular liberals have pushed through the courts.

From the point of view of America's conservatives, Feldman's solution is no solution at all. A prescription more sensitive to the history the author so ably outlines would begin by insisting on a distinction between the duties we owe to God and those that we owe to each other, represented by the first and second tables of the Ten Commandments, respectively. Our duty to God is none of the government's business. Our duties to each other are the foundation of our legal system. Admittedly, the problem of education is a little more complex. Education, it can be argued, has a quasi-religious function because it is about the world, which is God's world, and about character formation, which touches church and family as well as state. In the West, only the United States and France insist that publicly funded education must come exclusively from state-run schools. Secularists may be down on our health-care and death-penalty policies, but here is one instance of American exceptionalism that they actually defend! On the basis of Feldman's own evidence, however, it is no infringement of our freedoms if universal education, operating at the local level, were to include home schooling and parochial instruction as well as the public schools.

Howard F. Ahmanson, Jr., is founder and president of Fieldstead and Company, Inc.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS

Our Undemocratic Constitution: Where the Constitution Goes Wrong (And How We the People Can Correct It),
by Sanford Levinson. Oxford University Press, 248 pages, \$28



SANDY LEVINSON IS AN ICONOCLASTIC law professor. Though unabashedly on the left, he fairly delights in taking stances that challenge his fellow academic liberals. He is famous among gun-rights advocates for his 1989 *Yale Law Journal* article, "The Embarrassing Second Amendment." Before that article it was considered disreputable among constitutional scholars even to suggest that the Second Amendment protected an individual right to own guns. By legitimating an individual rights interpretation, Levinson's article inspired a wave of complementary scholarship in the 1990s that even persuaded Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe to reverse his treatment of the Second Amendment in his widely read treatise on constitutional law. The cumulative effect of the scholarship that followed in Levinson's wake eventually led to the recent decisions by federal courts of appeals in the Fifth and D.C. circuits to adopt an individual rights interpretation of the Second Amendment.

Around the same time, another article by Levinson in a symposium on the Ninth Amendment helped revive academic interest in the original meaning of that "forgotten" passage of the Constitution. To play a key role in reviving two out of the ten amendments in the Bill of Rights is no small achievement. Nor was it accidental. Levinson has a deep commitment to a consistent interpretation of the *whole* text of the Constitution, refusing to cherry-pick the portions of the text he likes while discarding the rest.

He is well known among legal scholars for his rejection of what he calls the "happy endings" approach to constitutional interpretation, by which clever analysis gets the interpreter whatever result he wants. Levinson insists that any method that *always* leads to the

results you like is not truly interpretation. Unless a method of interpretation produces some results with which its proponents are seriously unhappy, it is doing nothing more than reading their preferences into the Constitution. His insight has reshaped the entire field of constitutional law.

To be sure, he is no originalist. He does not believe that the meaning of the Constitution must remain the same until it is changed by a properly ratified written amendment. But he does insist that any method of interpretation must take the entire text seriously. For Levinson, who was a strong proponent of gun control at the time he published his Yale piece, the individual right to keep and bear arms was an "unhappy ending." But it was a price he was willing to pay for a consistent approach to constitutional interpretation that would yield happier endings from other portions of the text, including those that the Right might prefer to ignore: such as the Ninth Amendment's protection of unenumerated rights.

This deep intellectual integrity is also manifested in Levinson's pioneering casebook in constitutional law, which he co-authored with Paul Brest, the former dean of Stanford Law School. Instead of being organized by doctrine or subject like other casebooks, Levinson's is richly historical and chronological. Whereas casebooks typically begin with *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), Levinson's begins with the 1791 debate in Congress and the executive branch over the first great constitutional controversy—the establishment of a national bank. Not only does this emphasize the importance of the Constitution's original meaning, it displaces the courts in general and the Marshall Court in particular from their customary centrality in constitutional law.

A century ago the Progressives seized upon certain parts of John Marshall's opinions as a way to justify their own expansive views of federal power; and all other casebooks have comfortably accepted this framework. Not Levinson. His book confronts students with the views of Madison, Jefferson, Randolph, and Hamilton before they ever hear from Marshall. Levinson's interest in "the Constitution outside the courts" preceded by many years, and influenced greatly, the similar emphasis by Mark Tushnet, Larry Kramer, and Cass Sunstein.

In these ways, few have done as much to advance originalism as this non-originalist man of the Left. From his principled commitment to textual consistency, it is a short step to the view that "the meaning of the Constitution must remain the same until it is properly changed," which is another way of defining a proper originalism. Indeed, his frequent co-author, Yale law professor Jack Balkin, recently stepped across the line to endorse originalism, much to Levinson's chagrin.

HIS NEW BOOK, *OUR UNDEMOCRATIC Constitution: Where the Constitution Goes Wrong (And How We the People Can Correct It)*, represents an important shift in Levinson's thinking, though not in his interpretive method. While he once thought that, on the whole, the happy endings of a consistent reading of the Constitution outweighed the unhappy ones, he is now convinced that the Constitution "is radically defective in a number of important ways." In particular, he has become "ever more despondent about many structural provisions of the Constitution that place almost insurmountable barriers in the way of any ac-

ceptable notion of democracy." Still not one to evade the text's meaning, this book is Levinson's manifesto for a new constitutional convention to fix these many constitutional defects.

Our Undemocratic Constitution is two books in one. First, it provides a useful critique of several flaws in constitutionally established procedures, defects which are at least mildly disturbing. For example, he notes how difficult it would be to reconstitute Congress in the wake of a deadly terrorist attack against its members. He bemoans as well the mischief a lame-duck Congress of one party can do before its successors are sworn in, and the lengthy delay before a newly elected president takes office.

Second, the book is an impassioned critique of the "undemocratic" aspects of the Constitution. Levinson is no fan of the electoral college, or of the various choke points in the legislative process, especially the presidential veto. Nor does he care much for the pardon power. He opposes life tenure for unelected federal judges, and is positively indignant about the equal representation in the Senate that the Constitution affords every state regardless of population. He also strongly objects to the fact that incompetent and unpopular presidents get to serve out their terms, rather than being replaced (as in parliamentary systems) by their own party when the leader's fecklessness becomes apparent and public opinion turns.

His entire critique is a tribute to his textualism: he does not believe these alleged defects can be wished away by creative interpretation. But he refuses to suggest remedies, insisting that he is merely rallying a constituency for a constitutional convention where these matters will be decided, rather than pushing any particular solution to the problems he identifies. True, to make the case against the Constitution's defects, Levinson identifies alternatives from other countries, and he seems particularly fond of parliamentary systems, which have beguiled the American Left at least since Woodrow Wilson. But by failing to prescribe specific remedies for the ills he identifies, Levinson is unlikely to overcome the current resistance to constitutional reform.

THE BOOK WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR MORE effective if it had included a proposal for an omnibus constitutional amendment addressing all these flaws. But because another one of Levinson's bugbears is the Article V amendment process itself—requiring a supermajoritarian approval by states with unequal populations—even suggesting a constitutional amendment runs against his grain. That's particularly unfortunate since he has no real objection to a written constitution. Simply putting his proposed fixes in written form would not

have committed him to the arduous and "undemocratic" ratification process of Article V. But it would have forced him to be clear about what he is for and not just what he is against.

But *Our Undemocratic Constitution* has deeper problems. For a start, the book's indictment of flaws in the Constitution is at odds with its critique of "our undemocratic Constitution." Why aren't these defects being addressed by the democratic components of the current political process? After all, Levinson doesn't claim that reforms are being blocked by the "undemocratic" features of the Constitution; it seems rather that these issues just aren't attractive enough to ignite populist passions. To put it differently, there is no political incentive for democratically elected officials to look down the road and address these potentially awful results of very low probability events.

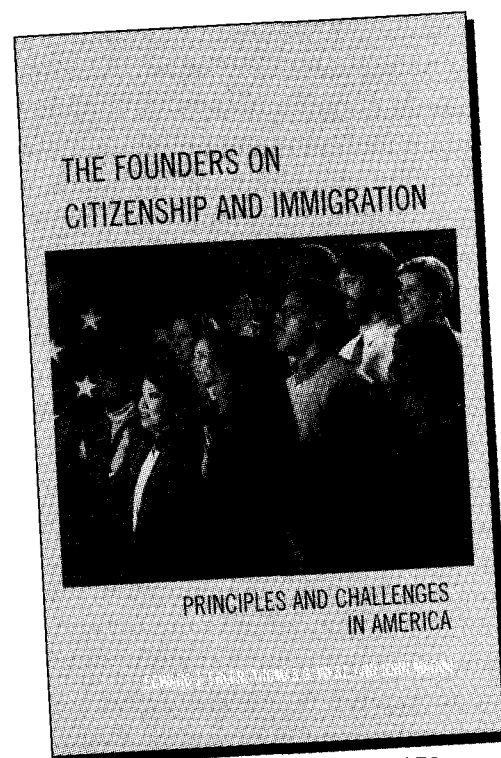
This is a well-known problem with government itself, especially of more "democratic" governments. Because government officials own no stock in "the company," so to speak, the long term is not nearly as important to them as the next election. And solving the problem of how Members of Congress will be selected after a nuclear strike on D.C. is not going to make any difference in the next election—especially because in the long run they'll all be dead. Contrary to primitive critiques of capitalism, private firms are far more future-oriented than government. It's a fair guess that the more democratic we make the Constitution, the less likely it is that these problems will be addressed.

An "undemocratic constitution" could mean one of two things. The first is something like a monarchy or dictatorship. The second is that there are too many veto points in our system by which political minorities can block majoritarian rule. When criticizing "our undemocratic constitution," Levinson clearly means the second. Indeed, a more accurate title for his book would be, "Our Counter-Majoritarian Constitution." But that wouldn't have the same appeal, because most Americans are not majoritarians—or more accurately, most Americans are not *pure* majoritarians. Neither, for that matter, is Sandy Levinson.

TO THE FOUNDERS, "REPUBLICANISM" required the people to have ultimate control of the government while "democracy" meant naked rule by the majority. The authors of the Constitution had developed grave doubts about the majoritarian rule they saw in abusive state legislatures and in the feckless one-house Congress established by the Articles of Confederation. Their goal was to cabin the ill-effects of majoritarianism. Here is how Madison explained this to Congress when in-

Edward J. Erler
John Marini
Thomas G. West

THE FOUNDERS ON CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION



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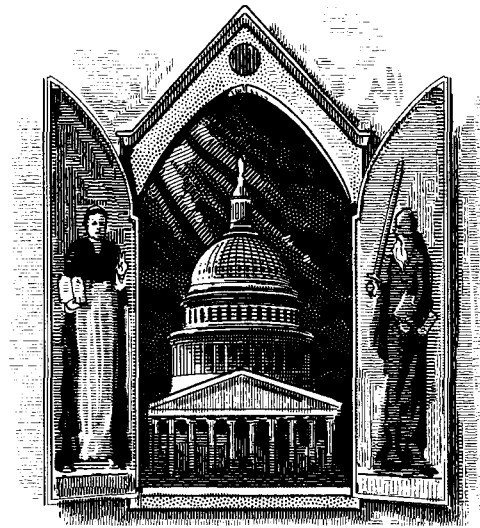
"Erler, West, and Marini are to be congratulated for their sober exploration of the racial and class considerations that seem to prevent us from enforcing the very laws we have passed."

—Victor Davis Hanson, Senior Fellow, the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and author of *Mexifornia: A State of Becoming*

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SAVING LIBERALISM FROM ITSELF

Natural Law Liberalism, by Christopher Wolfe.
Cambridge University Press, 268 pages, \$75



THE HISTORY OF LIBERALISM, ACCORDING to one point of view, is progressive, as over time an ever more thoroughly consistent individualism has emerged. Certainly today's liberal theorists, and the judges they influence, are more relentless than ever in trying to transform *all* of American life according to the autonomy principle. A big problem with such "progress," however, is that the implementation of a too-consistent liberalism may make our liberal democracy unsustainable. This is the burden of the argument in Christopher Wolfe's penetrating new book, *Natural Law Liberalism*. Wolfe, a political scientist at Marquette University, examines the more progressive formulations of contemporary liberalism found in the writings of John Rawls, Stephen Macedo, Ronald Dworkin, Amy Gutmann, Dennis Thompson, and Joseph Raz, and he convincingly makes the case that our seemingly most sophisticated thinking is becoming both tyrannical and self-destructive.

This brilliant critical analysis is a prelude to Wolfe's defense of natural law liberalism. He employs the great tradition of natural law—which centers on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas—as a way of moderating modern liberalism, of keeping it from becoming *simply* liberal. The truth, Wolfe admits, is that proponents of Thomistic natural law "find many liberal tendencies congenial," and gladly accept them as corrections to the illiberal tendencies in pre-modern articulations of natural law morality and politics. But modern-day Thomists also see that other liberal tendencies must be contained and directed "in order to make them reasonable and beneficial." Modern liberalism, it seems, requires assistance from outside sources to be either true or good.

Wolfe says he wants to be considered a liberal, but it's clear that his natural law understanding of both the purposes of government and the meaning of our humanity rests on premises fundamentally different from those of individualistic liberalism. Natural law, he explains, begins with "the idea of a natural order." This order is discovered, not created, by humans, and so shapes and limits a proper understanding of human liberty. It orients persons towards a natural hierarchy of human ends. Those ends—familial, political, philosophical, and theological—are shared by all humans. And the highest human end is that of discovering the truth about nature and the providential God, an end that necessarily limits the rights of the individual. Wolfe, in truth, defends much of liberal doctrine concerning liberty, equality, limited government, and freedom of conscience while rejecting the state-of-nature, natural rights framework characteristic of the early modern liberal thinkers.

IS SUCH A CORRECTED OR EXTERNALLY moderated liberalism internally consistent? Today's liberals claim that liberalism was based from the start on a comprehensive rejection of the Thomistic, natural law understanding, and that the history of modern liberalism is the working out of all the moral and political implications of that rejection. Yet they have to acknowledge that classical or Lockean liberalism, at least, did not seek to redefine all of human life in terms of egoistic individualism, that it distinguished religious toleration from indifference (or hostility) to religion, and that it supported public morality and family life. Classical liberalism was, Wolfe argues, more indebted to the natural law tradition than it was willing to concede. Early-

modern liberals, whatever their radical pretensions, sought a salutary correction more than a complete destruction of natural law's moral and political premises. Wolfe's natural law liberalism would then be an attempt to make conscious or explicit what earlier liberals took for granted. It is his view that the classical or Lockean combination of natural law and liberal individualism was more reasonable and beneficial than the hyper-liberalism that followed it.

Although Wolfe's presentation of natural law liberalism is able and nuanced, it is neither problem-free nor likely to convince his more comprehensively liberal opponents. One criticism is that his approach is too distinctively Catholic; he doesn't confront the difficulty that for most American Protestants (not to mention unbelievers), the natural law is anything but "natural." Another criticism is that Wolfe's project is less original than he lets the reader know. Orestes Brownson, in *The American Republic* (1865), and John Courtney Murray, in *We Hold These Truths* (1960), made earlier and worthy attempts to ground America's liberal order in some form of natural law, inaugurating Catholic Americans' effort to offer their country a theory worthy of our founders' great and enduring practical accomplishment.

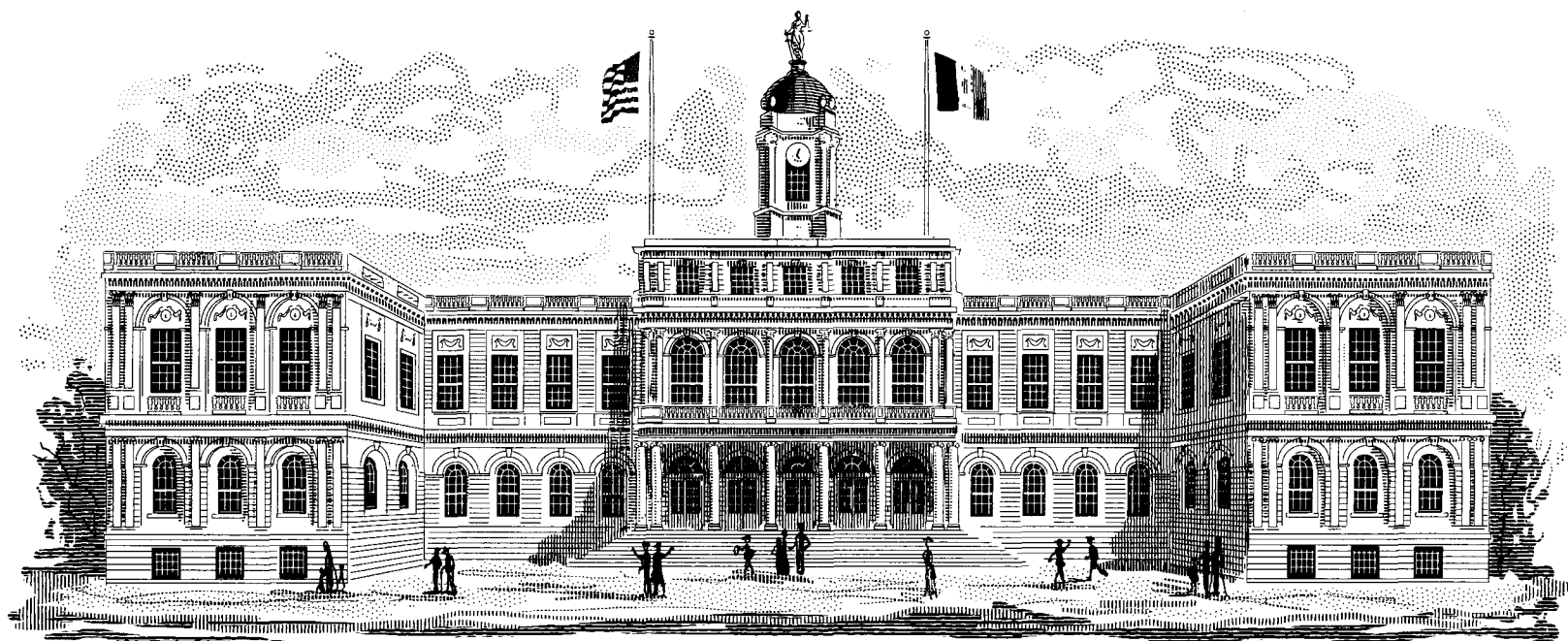
Brownson and Murray—and now Wolfe—suggest that America's Founding Fathers, in fact, built better than they knew, that American liberalism, if it will only acknowledge its pre-liberal debts, can be the foundation of a decent and dignified political order. We can be grateful to Wolfe for renewing a perennial quest to save our country's liberalism from its own excesses.

Peter Augustine Lawler is Dana Professor of Government at Berry College in Georgia.

Book Review by Hadley Arkes

BUILDING DEMOCRACY

Architecture of Democracy: American Architecture and the Legacy of the Revolution,
by Allan Greenberg, Rizzoli, 204 pages, \$50



New York City Hall, built 1802-1812, designed by Joseph François Mangin and John McComb, Jr.

“WHY AREN’T YOU GIVING A course on the American Founding?” The question came from Allan Greenberg, the architect, at lunch one day in Washington more than a dozen years ago. The question, sprung in part from curiosity, had the edge also of a reproach: why wasn’t I tending to this urgent business? It was the kind of question, with the note of gravity, that comes from émigrés who have fallen in deep love with this country and become rather intense on the question of why others have not become as absorbed as they have in studying the writings and the achievements of the American Founders. Greenberg had come from South Africa with his wife and small children in the summer of 1964, and he records in his new book the impressions that struck at once:

Standing in the main concourse of the International Terminal at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, I was aware of being surrounded by voices speaking English with more accents than I had ever imagined existed. An electric energy seemed to pulsate through the ground on which I was standing. At that moment I fell in love with America. It felt as if I had come home.

That love has not abated but deepened over 40 years, and it deepened as he immersed himself in the study of the American Founding in all of its aspects—the writings and letters of the leading figures, the Federalist and Anti-Federalist papers—and all of it amplified by the study of Lincoln. It was all comparably intense, and all done with that attentiveness to detail that marks the eye of the accomplished architect. Settled in America, Greenberg would become a leading figure in the revival of classical architecture, and he would come to teach a new appreciation of the distinctive American forms of that classicism in the 18th century. He would be recruited by George Shultz to redesign the Treaty Room at the State Department. As his name became known, he would design the flagship store for Bergdorf Goodman in New York, for Tommy Hilfiger in Los Angeles, and he would accumulate a portfolio of the most elegant buildings, private and public (including several pictured in this new book). He settled in New Haven as he began to design for a discerning clientele in Connecticut and New York, and before long he would add an office in Washington, which he makes now his base. Along the way he would teach at Yale, not only in the school of architecture, but in the school of law. With that assignment, he would take his

students for overnight stays in prison, partly to study the architecture of those buildings, bound up of course with their purposes and with the understanding of the nature of those beings, those fallen moral agents, that the buildings were designed to house.

GREENBERG FOUND HIS NATURAL, AND perfect, ally in the academy in Carroll William Westfall. The professor had fled from Amherst and settled for a long while in Charlottesville, at the University of Virginia. The two would celebrate the achievement of Jefferson, not only as an architect, but as the designer of a city. What Westfall would add, in the style of Jefferson, was the placing of architecture in a setting with a moral structure—the polis, the polity. Or more precisely, architecture would take its bearings, and find its references, in the character of the regime. The grammar of architecture would mark off the difference between a public building, directed to a larger civic or religious purpose, and the lesser buildings, devoted to things more prosaic, which subserved a higher purpose. As Daniel Robinson once remarked, the Man from Mars, landing in Athens and looking at the Parthenon, would know at once that it wasn’t a hamburger stand. The Italian cities of the Renaissance, studied

by Westfall, revealed that grammar and design, with the churches standing with the highest peaks, pointing to the highest ends of human life. Other buildings would follow in scale, with the awareness marked in stone and board, of the things that were higher and lower.

Westfall and Greenberg formed a powerful combination in that teaching, and what came along with the restoration of a classical perspective in architecture was a confrontation with the doctrines of relativism. For those doctrines, stylishly dressed now with the pretensions of art, were woven in, inseparably, with the radical claims of modernity in architecture. The question would arise, "Why can't we build any longer those beautiful buildings built by McKim, Mead, and White at the turn of the last century?" And the answer emanating from the architectural establishment was, "Those were the buildings of *their time*. We can build only the buildings of our own time." As Westfall recognized, this was simply the vice of "historicism" as absorbed by architects, who had never heard the term; the students of architecture had simply imbibed the notion that understandings of the "good," in morality or anything else, would always be relative to the historical epoch in which those understandings were held. As far as I know, Westfall is the only teacher of architecture and urban form who has incorporated Leo Strauss in his teaching, as a way of breaking out to students those facile assumptions of historicism, which they have witlessly made their own. Greenberg, backed by Westfall, would restore the notion that there is indeed a "good" that is enduring, a good that holds across the historical epochs, both in architecture and politics.

With that sense of architecture and the regime, Greenberg and Westfall would team up for lectures with slides, and in the early 1990s Professor Robert George and I invited Greenberg to do a lecture in that vein for a seminar of federal judges held in Princeton. With his usual polish, Greenberg offered the judges assembled a lesson on the connection between the doctrines of "natural right" held by the founders and the architecture of the period. The judges were utterly riveted, for they had evidently never seen or heard anything like it. And what Greenberg accomplished for the judges he has begun to make available to a larger audience in this new book. Along the way, he wrote a book on George Washington as an architect, in the design of Mount Vernon and its surroundings. But with this new book, Greenberg returns to that deep connection between architecture and the regime.

IT HAS BEEN SAID OFTEN THAT VISITORS or newcomers from abroad may see in America things that readily escape the

notice of people who were born and raised here. That line has been used most notably in regard to Tocqueville and his account of *Democracy in America*. But my own reading is that Greenberg's book, in this respect, surpasses Tocqueville. In the same way that he rather astonished the federal judges, he delivers a gentle but telling jolt to ordinary folk by alerting them to the things all around them—to those buildings, those structures of cities, so familiar to them that they no longer notice them. Or, wanting comparison with similar buildings and structures abroad, they no longer see what is so distinctively and movingly American about them. Classical architecture took its bearings from nature and the human body, and American architecture took its bearings from the human person, beginning with the things nearest at hand. What, after all, is the nearest, simplest concern of architecture for the person? The house. Throughout the landscape in Europe one would find the *Palais de Justice*: the buildings would take their character from the palace of the monarch, and they were meant to impress and overawe with the majesty of the law, drawn from the majesty of the monarch. But in America, there was the *house*: the *courthouse*, for the trying of cases; the *statehouse*, where people came to deliberate about the laws they would make together; or even the *jailhouse*, which began in some cases as an annex to the home of the jailor. In Northampton, Massachusetts, the old Meeting House became known as "our town's house." As Greenberg observes, the "American house-based model...stroved to create a new civic architecture, in which a citizen is at ease and feels a sense of ownership." It often goes unnoticed that the dome of the Capitol in Washington—that striking monument to a government by the people—does not cover the legislative chambers. It covers the vast hall in which ordinary citizens may meet as they come to press their concerns upon their representatives or to visit the scene where laws are made.

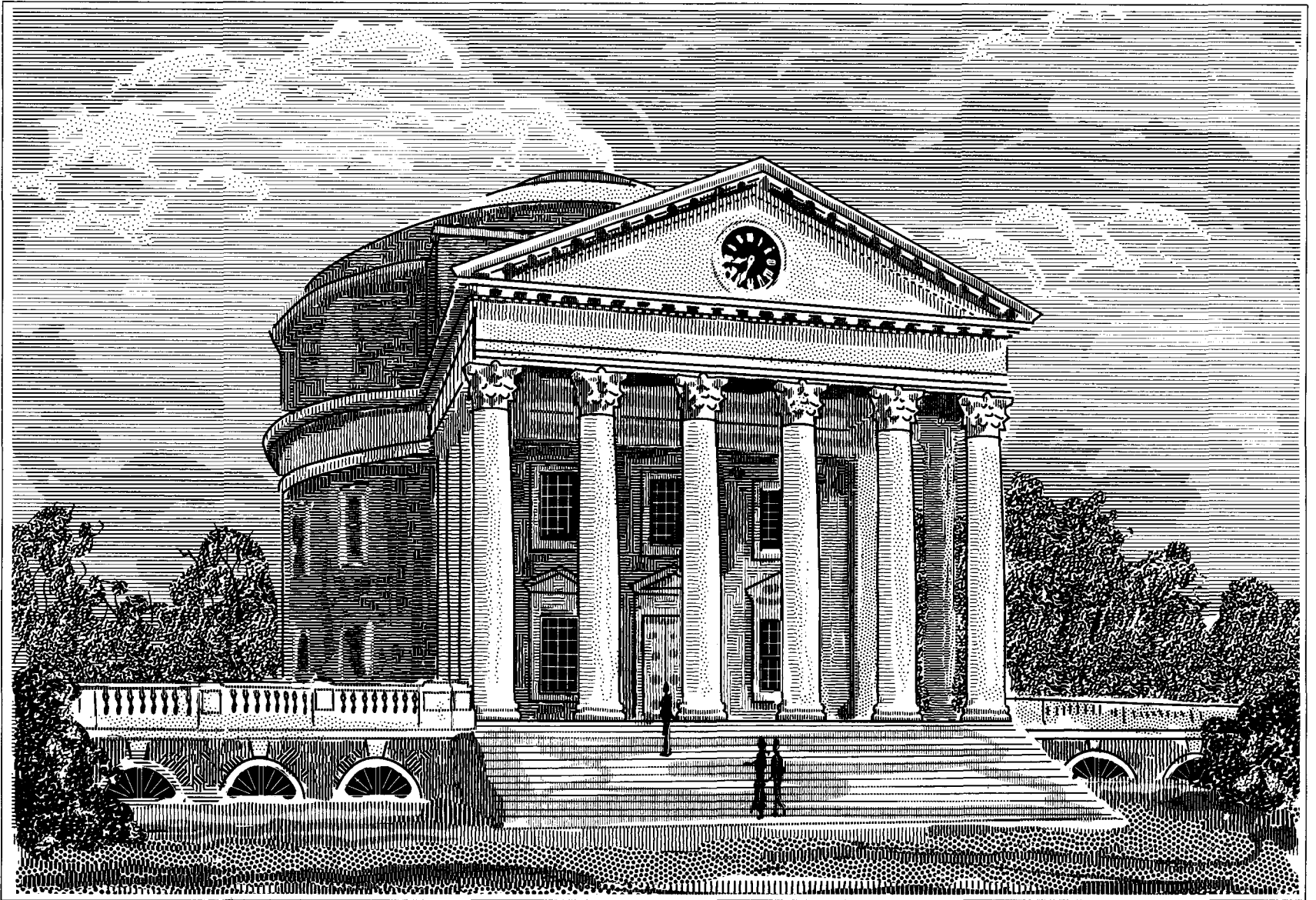
Greenberg, as the designer of courthouses and jailhouses, makes a special point of noting the principles that are woven into the design of American courtrooms. In England, the defendant may be placed alone in "dock," raised above the rest of the courtroom and facing the judge. In America, the prosecution and the defense sit at similar tables, set out symmetrically, facing the judge. There is a parity of dignity, because the law presumes the innocence of the accused, and the arrangements in the court are not meant to tilt the judgment. The judge is placed in the center, as the detached observer, judging without bias the two contending parties. Greenberg notes, in a passage that Tocqueville would have

appreciated, that "the public, at the rear of the courtroom, faces the judge and observes the law in action." It is the trial as a moment of civic teaching:

The jurors, who determine guilt or innocence, are placed on one side of the courtroom. They are unbiased observers, removed from the axis of the judge, counsel, defendant, and public. Because defendants are entitled to confront their accusers, the witnesses face the counsel tables but are placed adjacent to, and under the protection of, the judge.

IN CHISHOLM V. GEORGIA (1793), THE FIRST case to elicit a set of opinions in the new Supreme Court, James Wilson remarked that the law in America would stand on a different foundation from that of the law in England. The latter began with a sovereign issuing commands. But in America, said Wilson, "the sovereign, when traced to its source, must be found in the *man*." It must be found, that is, in a natural person, tendering his consent to the terms on which he is governed. It did not diminish the dignity of governance that the buildings were scaled to the human person, the subject and object of the laws. On the other hand, even the ordinary home was lifted in its dignity, because it was the abode of that person whose natural rights supplied both the ground and the purpose of the political order. As Wilson remarked, the purpose of this new government was not to invent new rights, but to secure and enlarge the rights we already possessed by nature. The home of that person or citizen, suitably modest, would be suitably elevated in turn. Greenberg offers as an illustration the Hammond-Harwood House (1774–84) in Annapolis, a simple brick house with a pediment, Ionic columns, and an archway framing the door. As he points out, the pediment, in ancient Greece and Rome, marked a temple, or the dwelling of a god. The symbols, carrying over from another time, suggest that "here, in the United States, this new democratic republic, the rights and prerogatives that were once reserved for the gods of the ancient world and the kings of Europe now belong to every citizen."

The pediment could be found, of course, on the Parthenon in Athens, the home of Athena. The pediments were supported by Doric columns, which in turn took their model from the human figure, with the capital for the head, and with the feet proportioned to the body. The building, with its clear, anthropomorphic images, conveyed the sense of the citizens of Athens supporting the home of its goddess and protector. That essential sense of things would be carried over, without strain, to symbolize a



Rotunda at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, built 1818-19, designed by Thomas Jefferson

democracy under law: a polity that would find its base and its purpose in the standing, and the moral condition, of the human persons who composed it.

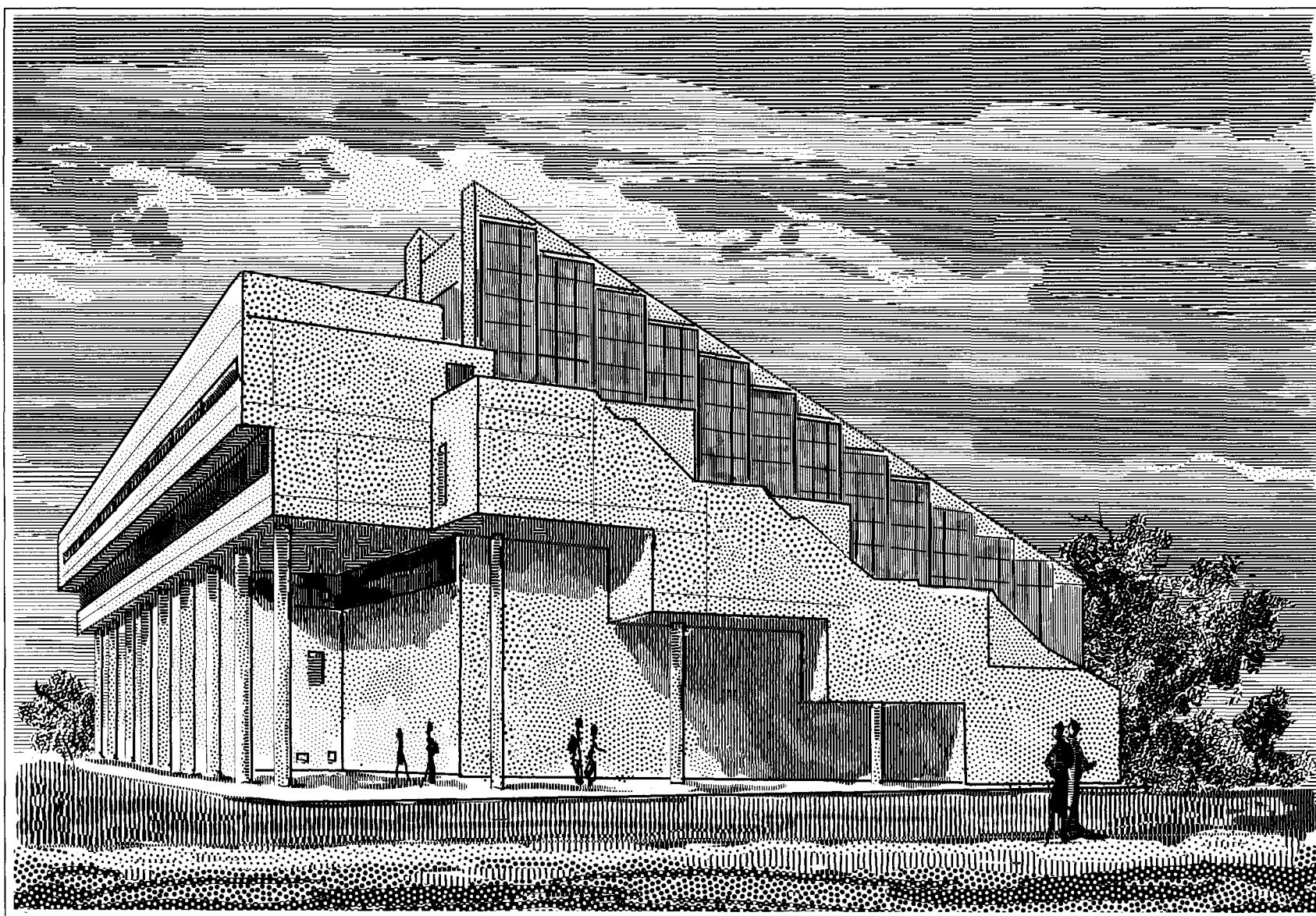
That same sense of things scaled to the human body may be the reason we can still find something connected to us—and something strikingly beautiful—in those grand skyscrapers put up in the Age of Art Deco, and even earlier in the last century. Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York (1913), the tallest building of its time, offers a base of only about three floors, quite graspable. As Greenberg notes, the "articulation of its façade...assists an observer's eye and mind to measure it progressively, in parts, each of which is scaled to relate to a human being." The same effect was accomplished in another artful way in the Empire State Building, which succeeded the Woolworth Building and held its place for a longer time as the world's tallest building. The building does not soar until it is set back after the fifth floor. At the level of the sidewalk, in the things that catch our eye, the building does not look gargantuan or out of harmony with the things around it. "In a brilliant move," says Greenberg, "the shaft of the tower is set back

from the busy Fifth Avenue sidewalk so that its great height does not loom over the pedestrians and make them feel insignificant."

SOMETHING TRULY DIFFERENT, SOMETHING reeking of a different modernity, came in after the Second World War. That new state of things could be seen in the skyline that now marks New York, Chicago, and other cities: towering rectangles or ice-cube trays in assembly with one another, without even the articulation, or the embellishments, noble or whimsical, that made the towers of the old buildings say something distinctive in the cities of their day. Edward Durrell Stone's Legislative Building in Raleigh, North Carolina (1963) looks like a ranch house with posts lining the perimeter on all sides. The posts may be a faint gesture toward the columns of old, but with the old understanding faded, the place where the legislature meets is hardly distinguishable from an office building. It might be the headquarters of an investment company, or converted tomorrow into offices for Wal-Mart. In one of his notable slips into understatement, Greenberg describes these kinds of buildings as "self-referential." But it

is not merely that they slip into a version of solipsism, where a building is making a statement about itself or offering an expression of the mind that designed it. It is rather that the buildings form a jumble, with no discernible moral structure of the whole. There is no sense that any one of these buildings, with their rich variety of businesses, retail and wholesale, with their array of corporate enterprises—that the purpose of any of these buildings is higher or lower than anything else. It's not like the design we can grasp at once in the Italian cities, where we see no civic building rising above the churches, or no commercial buildings proclaiming their supremacy over civic buildings dedicated to the civic life of the whole. It is not like Washington, D.C., even today, where no buildings eclipse the Capitol or the Washington Monument.

And it is not even like the design, so simple and dramatic, that Mr. Jefferson imparted to his "academical village" in Charlottesville, Virginia. Everything in that arrangement points to the domed Library as the capital or the head, marking the higher purpose of a university. The pavilions, with their classrooms and residences, for masters and students, take their bearings



Gund Hall (Graduate School of Design, Harvard University), Cambridge, MA, built 1968-74, designed by John Andrews

from that central purpose of the campus and lead to the Library. The serpentine walls, the lawns, the furnishings inside the buildings show the hand of the artist, who adds his art guided by the overall design. But that overall design reflects, again, an aesthetic that is informed by a moral understanding, of the purposes or ends that are higher and lower. Greenberg takes the treatment of Jefferson and Charlottesville as the culmination of his book, with Jefferson placed now by Greenberg as the preeminent architect in America. Jefferson might have been, as an architect, self-taught, but his creation, says Greenberg, is unlike any other complex of buildings:

Its design sophistication rivals the Acropolis, another group of many buildings harmoniously related to each other and the surrounding landscape. Jefferson's academical village creates a coherent community; it is the apogee of architectural endeavor in the United States.

But as artful as Jefferson was, in the designs of furnishings as well as structures, it is hard finally to detach his art from the political under-

standing that governed the whole. It might be said of him, as an architect, what Lincoln said of him as a founder: that he had the wit to take a moment of practical judgment and articulate "an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times."

HARRY JAFFA REMARKED TO MARTIN Gilbert, in regard to one of the thickest volumes in his biography of Churchill, that his only complaint was that the book was too short. The comparable complaint here is that Greenberg's book is too beautiful. The book is published by Rizzoli, the premier publisher of books on fine arts. Allan Greenberg, an accomplished artist himself, naturally seeks the most accomplished publisher in this field, and the reproductions are indeed exquisite. But the print itself does not suggest a book meant mainly for reading. The exposition in the book seems to support the striking photographs, with their vivid examples of buildings. But this is a book that should be the natural companion to Tocqueville, for the professors who are trying to explain America to the Americans. It should not be a book splendid for coffee tables or the shelf containing the masterpieces of Rizzoli. It

should be a book of graspable size, finding its place in the backpack of every undergraduate in the country.

And yet, the book may be only a beginning. In its text and its presentation, it is geared to a series made for television. I'll offer my own wish that the project makes it to television and the broader public. But in the next phase, we should have the book distilled as a book, to be spread widely in the land, and then followed perhaps by the further lessons Greenberg has to teach as he unfolds his fuller argument and completes his mission. He has before him now, in his grasp, the means of driving a stake through the relativism that has debased our architecture and demeaned our cities. And after that, the rest is in sight: he continues, in his vocation, to design the buildings that show us how to restore a classic architecture, and to confirm again the lessons that the public at large already seems to grasp—that there is, indeed, in politics and in architecture, an enduring good.

Hadley Arkes is the Edward Ney Professor of American Institutions at Amherst College, and a fellow of the Claremont Institute.

Book Review by Daniel J. Mahoney

A NOBLE AND GENEROUS SOUL

Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life, by Hugh Brogan.
Yale University Press, 736 pages, \$35

Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy's Guide, by Joseph Epstein.
HarperCollins, 224 pages, \$21.95



JOSEPH EPSTEIN, IN HIS NEW BIOGRAPHY of Tocqueville, wryly asks what the great Frenchman himself would have made of "le phénomène de Tocqueville." For as Epstein points out, it is impossible nowadays to think "about America, about democracy, about liberty, about bureaucracy, about equality, about almost any aspect of politics, or for that matter about large stretches of human nature" without reference to Tocqueville. Yet there is, in truth, no simple answer to Epstein's question, because Tocqueville always remained something of a mystery even to himself. On the one hand, he was determined to leave his mark on the world through both his thought and his action. He aspired to greatness and to fidelity to moral and political principles of the first order, including a profound and uncompromising commitment to political liberty. On the other hand, he suffered debilitating doubts about his capacity to make good on his hopes for himself and his country.

Epstein's little study, part of HarperCollins's "Eminent Lives" series, along with Hugh Brogan's massive new biography, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life*, helps us to appreciate the mystery of Tocqueville. Each book has its virtues. Brogan provides a plausible portrait of Tocqueville's world that includes many telling details; but

his book, even though three times the length of Epstein's, fails to do justice to Tocqueville's political thought. By contrast, Epstein's short volume—part biographical sketch, part personal reflection—shows why Tocqueville the thinker remains to this day worthy of our attention, and how Tocqueville's immense "power of analysis and trenchancy of formulation" continue to move us.

Brogan's book will have to be reckoned with by all Anglophone students of Tocqueville. It is lively, comprehensive, well-researched, and exceedingly well-written. It is more interesting, if less reliable, than André Jardin's authoritative 1984 biography of the Frenchman, *Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805–1859*. Whatever the new book's defects—and they are considerable—it has the merit of artfully conveying Tocqueville's world to us. Brogan depicts the royalist or "legitimist" circle that first shaped Tocqueville's heart and soul; a dignified and loving family tinged with sadness and tragedy; the deep and affecting friendships with Kergorlay, Beaumont, Corcelle, Ampère, and many others that did so much to enrich his life and thought; and the drama of post-revolutionary France, afflicted by the revolutionary virus and unable to find for itself a stable, moderate, legitimate regime.

TOCQUEVILLE'S PROFOUND LOVE OF liberty and his noble and generous soul become, in Brogan's telling, almost palpable. We commune with the man and admire a greatness of soul that owes something to the dying world of aristocracy but isn't simply reducible to aristocratic convention.

This faithfulness to Tocqueville's world is all the more striking because Brogan himself shares all of today's egalitarian prejudices. For him, democracy is an unqualified good and anything that challenges it is evidence of aristocratic nostalgia, narrow class interest, or "masculinist ideology." He fails to take Tocqueville seriously as a political thinker who in some decisive respects transcended his milieu. At the same time, Brogan fails to appreciate the broadest context of Tocqueville's life and thought, what Tocqueville calls the great "democratic revolution" that was already transforming the Christian European world. His understanding of what might be gained and lost in the transition from the "aristocratic" to the "democratic" dispensation (great "orders of humanity," rather than regimes in the narrow sense of the term) gives Tocqueville's work a certain timeless intellectual and spiritual depth.

Both Brogan and Epstein are sensitive to the traumatizing effects of the French Revolution on royalist France, not least on *la famille Tocqueville*. As Epstein puts it, "the revolution darkened Alexis' youth...and haunted all his mature years. Why the revolution had happened, what it wrought, and which precisely were its continuing effects on French life—these were to be among the main concerns behind all Tocqueville's writing." His mother, Louise Madeleine Le Peletier de Rosambo de Tocqueville (1771–1836), was the granddaughter of the great Malesherbes, one of the most humane and liberal-minded figures of the final period of the old regime. Malesherbes was guillotined on April 23, 1794, after defending Louis XVI at his trial in the revolutionary Convention. Many perished on both the Tocqueville and Rosambo sides of the family. Tocqueville's parents escaped a similar fate only because of the timely overthrow of Robespierre's Terrorist regime on the ninth of Thermidor (July 27), 1794. Tocqueville's proud, disinterested love of liberty was a rare quality of a noble soul, but his lifelong disdain for the *esprit révolutionnaire*, and his desire to extricate democracy from any entanglement with it, were deeply rooted in personal experience.

As Brogan shows, Tocqueville's father Hervé was a model of the public-spirited aristocrat. A committed "Legitimist," attached through tradition and sentiment to the Bourbon family, he could not take the oath to the new "Orleanist" King Louis-Philippe who was installed by the "bourgeois" revolution of July 1830. As a result, he effectively retired from political life. But he had the good sense not to encourage Alexis to do so. His son believed that the Bourbon dynasty had forfeited, through political heavy-handedness and no small dose of stupidity, its right to govern France; but rather than immediately taking up a political career in the new regime, he set out for America and began to write the work that would make him famous.

WITH THE PUBLICATION OF VOLUME one of *Democracy in America* in 1835, Tocqueville burst onto the stage as a thinker of the first order. He was only 30 years old. The most eminent men of his day compared the book to Aristotle's *Politics* and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. That same year Tocqueville married Mary Motley, a bright, intense (and intermittently sickly) Englishwoman who was nine years his elder. This marriage to a middle-class English Protestant whom he respected and loved was a classic, even scandalous "misalliance." Their marriage was severely tested by Tocqueville's occasional infidelities—infidelities that he confessed and regretted—and by an emotional neediness on the part of

both partners. For all their emotional ups and downs, however, Alexis and Mary were devoted to each other and remained the central figures in each other's lives to the end.

Though he could come across as haughty and cold to those who did not know him well, Tocqueville was capable of great devotion, which he extended not only to Mary but also to his inner circle of friends. Pride of place belongs to Gustave de Beaumont, whom he first met as a young lawyer at Versailles in the late 1820s. Epstein rightly states that the intense personal, political, and intellectual partnership between Tocqueville and Beaumont "is perhaps without an analogue in history." Their friendship was at least as significant as Marx and Engels's. Tocqueville and Beaumont spoke with each other about everything, co-wrote the impressive *Du Système pénitentiaire* (the study of prisons that was the official rationale for their trip to North America in the first place), wrote perfectly complementary works on American institutions and mores (*Democracy in America* and the insufficiently appreciated *Marie*—Beaumont's "novel" of race and slavery in America) and coordinated all of their post-1830 political and intellectual activities.

IF BROGAN SUCCEEDS IN RECOVERING Tocqueville's world, however, he is woefully unsuccessful in capturing his thought. He censures the French political thinker for his deeply suspicious idea of "the tyranny of the majority"—an idea that ostensibly reveals Tocqueville's insufficient confidence in "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Brogan caricatures Tocqueville's measured analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of democracy as "the anxious degradation of American democracy." This biographer simply cannot distinguish between the candid friend and the indiscriminate flatterer of democracy, and foolishly insists that all criticisms of democratic majoritarianism are proffered with anti-democratic intent.

Similarly, Brogan cannot fathom that Tocqueville's equanimity in addressing the two great "anthropological forms" of political experience—democracy and aristocracy—is rooted in a profound thoughtfulness about both human nature and the nature of democracy. As Pierre Manent points out in an insightful article ("Tocqueville, Political Philosopher" in the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*), "[t]hese questions are currently resolved as follows: Tocqueville was a political man of old noble stock who made a resolute choice for democracy in his head while his heart remained filled with aristocratic 'nostalgia.'" Manent concedes that some of Tocqueville's own statements support such an interpreta-

tion. But a more serious reading suggests that Tocqueville's quasi-neutrality (at least on the philosophical plane) between democracy and aristocracy is rooted in a fundamental tension in his own mind.

"On the one hand," Manent writes, there is

the perspective of justice. From this point of view, the modern, democratic conception of liberty—liberty as equal rights—is undoubtedly the just one. The ancient, aristocratic conception of liberty as privilege has to be given up. This judgment 'of the head' was also a judgment 'of the heart': Tocqueville, 'the Norman aristocrat,' shared the primary emotion of democracy when he spoke of men as 'obviously similar.'

Hence Tocqueville's hatred of racism and slavery, his profound admiration for America's political and constitutional arrangements, and his support for a political order that would bring "the people" into the political process in France. On the other hand, Manent continues, Tocqueville could never forget

the perspective of *grandeur*, or *independence*, which he also calls *liberty*—but this is a liberty different from 'equal liberty.' Here the concern is no longer primarily with relations among men but with the quality of each man's soul, of his 'tone,' of his 'stature' or 'grandeur.' For Tocqueville, as for Aristotle, the perspective of 'magnanimity' does not coincide with that of 'justice,' and sometimes comes into contradiction with it.

By keeping this tension alive in our souls Tocqueville succeeds in liberating us from democratic dogmatism and broadening our spiritual vision. Brogan understands none of this, alas; but Epstein shows a much fuller appreciation of the philosophical dimensions of Tocqueville's work. He recognizes that Tocqueville's endorsement of democracy is "somehow less than ebullient," but he knows that it is nonetheless wise and sincere.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EPSTEIN'S and Brogan's books become even more apparent when one compares their respective treatments of Tocqueville's *Recollections*. This posthumously published work is his account of the revolution of 1848—the first broadly "socialist" revolution in Europe—and of his political activity in the period between the February 1848 revolution and Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851. Since 1830, Tocqueville and Beaumont had identi-

decorative border

fied, uneasily, with a left opposition that advocated far-reaching social reforms as well as deliberate efforts to include more Frenchmen in the country's political life. But after February 1848, Tocqueville stood with "the party of order" against those radical and socialist elements that challenged civilization's very foundations, not least the right to property. Although Epstein sees in this stance a reasoned commitment to freedom, reform, and the rule of law, Brogan discerns only blind loyalty to class interests, "neurotic" fear of revolution, and "commitment to an obsolescent economic theory."

In his "Speech on the Right to Work" of September 12, 1848, Tocqueville argued that full-fledged socialism was nothing less than a new "road to servitude" because it makes the state "the sole owner of property," unleashes man's crudest material passions, and shows "a deep distrust of liberty, of human reason, a profound scorn for the individual in his own right." Epstein rightly discerns in Tocqueville's principled opposition to socialism the decency and good sense of a conservative-minded liberal. Though admitting that the *Recollections* is a "literary masterpiece," Brogan sees behind it a fearful, insensitive, and selfish defender of an antiquated class.

Tocqueville despised the stultifying mediocrity of political life in France between 1830 and 1848. A political class led by the likes of François Guizot and Adolph Thiers—unimaginative and insensitive to new dangers on the horizon—did not stir his soul. Tocqueville's struggle after February 1848 to defend a lawful republic against both the radical Left and the Bonapartist Right fired him with a renewed sense of purpose. It was at this point that he found his political faith of "liberty under God and the law"—a faith to which he gave eloquent expression in his 1856 masterpiece, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*.

BROGAN AND EPSTEIN RECOGNIZE THE mixture of magnanimity and anxiety that moved Tocqueville. He was always haunted by doubt, which he described in 1831 as one of the three great "miseries" afflicting the human race (the others being death and illness). He lost his faith at the age of 16, though he remained a broadly theistic thinker who repeatedly expressed confidence in the existence and providence of God. In the political realm, he was more or less content with what he called "probabilistic" truths. For example, one could not so much disprove various forms of historical and racial determinism as show their lack

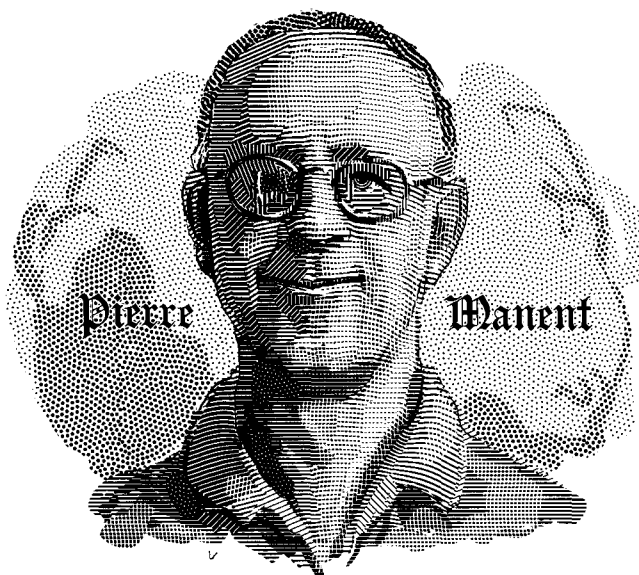
of plausibility—and their deeply pernicious effects on liberty and the human soul.

But in philosophy and theology, Tocqueville wanted to affirm something on the order of indubitable truth. He confessed and received communion before his death—partly to please his wife Mary (a fervent convert to Catholicism), but also because he undoubtedly yearned to return to full communion with the Church of his youth. He was, in any case, only obliged to confess his sins and not to affirm his belief in all the dogmas of the Church. His ultimate religious convictions will always remain mysterious. The evidence suggests that he died with some of his doubts intact, but with a renewed desire to find solace in the faith's great metaphysical and spiritual truths. Unusually confident in his principles and personal integrity, Tocqueville was yet never quite at home with himself or the world. One needs the help of both Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Pascal's *Pensées* to account for his distinctive—and paradoxical—"greatness of soul."

Daniel J. Mahoney is chairman of the political science department at Assumption College and the author of books on Raymond Aron, Charles de Gaulle, Bertrand de Jouvenal, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

BODILESS POLITICS

A World Beyond Politics? A Defense of the Nation-State, by Pierre Manent, translated by Marc LePain.
Princeton University Press, 228 pages, \$35



IF POLITICS, AS MODERN SOCIAL SCIENCE proclaims, is best defined as “who gets what, when, how, and why,” then Pierre Manent’s *A World Beyond Politics?* must be judged as nonsensical. By floating vague warnings about a Europe on the verge of “leaving the political behind” or “exit[ing] from politics,” Manent would only be indulging in the conceit, not uncommon to a certain species of European intellectual, of entertaining with enigma and puzzling with paradox. As long as humans live together—or so the social scientist insists—someone or some process will always be deciding who “gets” some things. A nation “beyond politics” is an impossibility.

Can Pierre Manent really be as lost as this? His record clearly suggests otherwise. He has written some of this generation’s finest books of political thought, including the deeply challenging *The City of Man* (1998), and he is widely regarded as among the best “readers” of philosophical texts since Leo Strauss, one of the two major intellectual figures to have influenced his own approach. If nothing else, *A World Beyond Politics?*—which derives from a lecture course on political philosophy that Manent gave for a time at the Institute for Political Studies in Paris—demonstrates his talents as a teacher. He interprets in the manner of both a hedgehog and a fox, alternating between illuminating synopses of general intellectual developments and penetrating analyses of specific authors. Nor is he just an interpreter of old books. Manent’s other

mentor was the international relations theorist Raymond Aron, renowned for his studies of the reciprocal relation between ideas and the great issues of our era. Manent follows squarely in this tradition, aiming in this book to present an “impartial overview of the political order—or disorder—of today’s world.” Manent provides, in addition, a defense of politics that is intended as a wake up call to fellow Europeans who have forgotten, or who no longer fully appreciate, the value of what he calls “the political.”

HUMANS, ACCORDING TO MANENT, CAN live in society and be ruled, but they are not thereby engaged in a genuinely “political” relation. Politics is a term of distinction; there is no genuine politics in tyrannies or extensive empires. A political relation requires at least two things: first, there must be a large and important enough stock of matters that is placed in common. Although that stock can be too great—Aristotle faulted Plato’s *Republic* on this account—it can also be too meager, with the result that politics is reduced to triviality. The other requirement of politics is what Manent refers to metaphorically as a “body,” meaning a recognized and limited group who are engaged together in this enterprise. A political relation needs a “people,” some bounded number of persons who share a mysterious identity bred from things like common territory, mores, religious presuppositions, ancestors, belief in the same principles of government, and shared

memories and experiences, especially the experience of having struggled and spilled blood together.

A look at these two requirements sheds light on some of the problems that confront liberal democracy today. Manent argues that the political philosophy of liberalism, which in the 18th century wisely reduced the existing scope of matters formally placed in common so as to enable larger numbers of people to live together peacefully and in freedom (e.g., by separating church and state), contained also a seed of the desire to escape the bonds of community altogether. This was found in liberalism’s encouragement of personal independence and autonomy, which have since sprouted into immoderate demands for recognition of personal identity. In addition, the modern doctrines of moral humanitarianism and of evolving personal rights have served to justify the notion that most things can be determined without recourse to politics. Agreements and institutions applying international humanitarian norms can obviate conflicts that once might have required war; experts, such as administrators or judges, can decide matters of rights according to objective criteria. These de-politicizing sentiments and doctrines, Manent argues, are especially at home in Europe. They almost need to be, because the idea that lies behind the current project of European identity cannot work, even in the imagination, unless the demands of politics are very

minimal. Europeans today are “embarked on the bold adventure of building a democracy without a people.”

MANENT DOES NOT DWELL ON THE fine points of definition, but puts his concept of politics to work in a broad historical survey of developments in the West. His analysis leads him to address what he calls the “form” of social organization, meaning the type of physical-geographical unit, as well as the corresponding psychological horizon, in which politics takes place. The “form” precedes the regime (tyranny, democracy, oligarchy, etc.). Aristotle had already begun to explore this question by distinguishing among the tribe, the city-state, and the larger empires to the east. In only one form, he argued famously, was genuine politics possible: the city-state. The city-state was large enough to be self-sufficient, yet small enough to have an intense, deliberative common life.

All this, at least as far as the city-state is concerned, is ancient history. For at the very moment Aristotle was writing, the city-state in Greece was on the verge of extinction. Through continual warfare, culminating in the Peloponnesian War, the *poleis* were drained of their strength; meanwhile, a new power—and a new kind of power—arose in the north (Macedonia). The city-states became tributary to an empire. The term “empire,” which Manent uses both concretely and metaphorically, though not always clearly, suggests an aspiration to something universal. Empire gives rise to a psychological horizon that denies and disdains the particularity of bounded political communities. Empires can have their strong points—order, peace, schools, personal liberty, roads, and sanitation were only a few of the advantages invoked in a famous scene in Monty Python’s *The Life of Brian*. But they lack something, too. Manent recalls Aristotle’s argument that human beings are by nature political animals, who are not “completely fulfilled unless they lead a civic life, unless they are citizens.”

Manent draws attention to a remarkable parallel between the development of political forms in the ancient and modern worlds. Even as the city-state emerged in the Peloponnesus, a new form, the nation-state, began to develop in Europe in the Middle Ages. It re-opened a space for politics and eventually became the form in the modern world that—given a suitable choice of regimes—could support and sustain a civic life. The nation-state is thus the spiritual successor to the city-state, though not, of course, a perfect replica. It is much larger and embraces greater heterogeneity, differences it has been able to manage thanks to the political device of representation and to

liberalism (in the Lockean sense). At the same time, the nation-state was capable of meeting many of the new requirements of self-sufficiency dictated by modern conditions. This novel form was able to develop in a context in which the new states were not subsidiary parts of some larger empire, but independent entities, enmeshed in a system of relations with each other. This mutual recognition of particularity became the lens through which many in Europe saw the world. It is worth adding that “Europe,” viewed as a single unit—for so it was often seen by the rest of the world—was a great empire, with colonies stretching around the globe.

The parallels suggested by the cycle extend further. For what happened to the city-state on the little peninsula of the Peloponnesus in the 4th century B.C., eventually happened to the nation-states on the peninsula of Europe in the 20th century. From the catastrophe of recurring, bloody wars—which devastated Europe and discredited the nation-state—emerged a desire to build a new kind of Europe that would safely put war and politics behind it. Here arises yet another difficulty, according to Manent, with the current plan of constructing Europe. It is predicated on a belief among the political classes that “their future [lies] with a clean break with their whole past.”

MANENT OFFERS NO BLUEPRINT IN this book for the future of Europe, but asks the reader instead to consider the three options that are in play: a federation of a limited number of nation-states; a new and enlarged Europe that would be a kind of super-state (or empire) supported by the development of a European people; and finally, the reigning idea, a Europe “defined paradoxically as an indefinite expansion.” Admittedly, Europe cannot spread everywhere; but the thinking that lies behind this third option rests on a vague hope for a kind of benevolent universal empire based on humanitarian norms: “It would be the empire with no common power, except for the weak United Nations, constituted by the whole of humanity.” It is soft despotism writ large.

Although the treatment of all of these themes would seem to be more than enough for a single volume, Manent’s promise to provide an overview of “the world order” means that he cannot avoid discussing America, however briefly. For in the world today, America stands at the center as “the real empire.” In the great historical cycle Manent sketches, America plays the same commanding role in relation to Europe that Macedonia played toward Greece: “Just as the Greek cities had had to submit to Macedonian hegemony, so the European nations had to submit to American hegemony.”

ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION MANENT poses is what kind of “form” America exemplifies. His answer, which seems deliberately ambiguous, is that the United States is “a single nation with strong traits of empire.” The traits of empire include the speed with which America swept across a continent, and the attraction and openness of America to so many immigrants. Probably the most important consideration, however, is the country’s sheer dimensions, which lead Europeans on first encounter to think it a form different in kind from the nation-state.

Interestingly, this issue of dimension was at the center of one of the great debates in America in the mid-19th century. Many in the Whig Party doubted that a physical unit of continental scale (or at least one constructed so quickly) was compatible with the United States remaining a nation; they feared a weakening of the common bonds that make a people. By contrast, many Democrats adopted a position favorable not merely to what we know in retrospect as continental expansion, but also to something remarkably akin to what Manent describes as “indefinite expansion.” They spoke of an “empire of liberty” that might include the islands of the Caribbean, Mexico, and the whole of the Americas, with scant regard to anything like the traditional characteristics of peoplehood, which they deemed unnecessary. The historical resolution of this debate came in the form of continental expansion, but with a renewed attention to the need to maintain certain common features of nationhood. Manent acknowledges this settlement of the matter by observing that, despite its vast dimensions, America has managed to form a people. In this sense it is clearly a nation.

The reason for classifying America as an empire has less to do with its internal character than with its impact on the world. America now “sets the rules by which most citizens of the world consent to live” and is the “throne,” “insurer,” and “guardian of last resort.” The United States “is a sort of ‘common instrument’ that the world uses to govern itself.” America has such a major impact on others that some Europeans, only half-jokingly, demand the right to vote in our elections.

America’s world preeminence is a bitter pill for Europeans to swallow. America was once a colony that has become an imperium, while Europe was once an imperium that has become a colony. Such a reversal of fortune is bound to be especially hard on many European intellectuals, who are far more closely tied to the pride of the nation-state than they like to acknowledge. But while their current plight may merit a degree of sympathy, it cannot begin to excuse the petty resentment, infantile petulance, and will-

ful contempt for truth that has gone into the construction of the ideology of anti-Americanism, exported by European intellectuals to the rest of the world. The Greek intellectuals at the time of the Roman Empire, who faced a comparable situation, never behaved so disreputably, although perhaps this was because a much sterner taskmaster restrained them.

Manent, a philosopher rather than an intellectual, is free of such narrow prejudices. He judges America impartially. America "is in most cases a benevolent and often an enlightened empire. In quite a few circumstances it even deserves to be qualified as generous. It is the only empire, along with Alexander's, to belong to this category." (Taking into account the favorable evaluations from Isaiah and Aristotle, perhaps Cyrus the Great's empire should be added to this list.) Still, to Europeans, America is objectively an empire. And speaking impartially, Manent observes that if Europe ever should create the super-state some hope for, "a confrontation of an unprecedented kind seems inevitable."

BUT A RIVALRY OF THIS SORT, AMONG equals, is for another day. In current circumstances, Manent ascribes a large part of the conflict between America and Europe to the difference in their forms. America is a nation (or empire) with a people; Europe is bodiless and chasing a dream of infinite expansion. By the logic of its position, Europe has been compelled to extol notions of "soft power," while America has had the luxury to choose between soft and hard power. Manent clearly approves of America's ability to choose, if not of all the choices it has made.

Manent's discussion of the conflict concludes, however, most unexpectedly. Despite their differences, he finds that America and Europe are both guided by the idea that democracy, as each understands it, can and should be spread universally. Take either soft power or hard power, or both together, and what they harbor is this common metaphysical view: that the world can be made by us and dominated to our liking. This view, Manent writes, rests on a profound illusion that fails to reckon with "the intractable character of the political world," "belittle[s] the political and human meaning of a mankind naturally divided among different peoples," and "wildly exaggerate[s] the docility or plasticity of the peoples of the world, including Western peoples." In a tone reminiscent of Tocqueville's description of the "religious terror" he felt in his soul in writing *Democracy in America*, Manent states that his concern about this illusion "has accompanied me throughout the writing of this book."

Manent is restating here a traditional con-

servative admonition about the dangers of modern philosophy, which proclaims its power to master and to control. The core of his warning is that nature imposes limits, and that a failure to heed these limits must bring disappointment and tragedy. This is sound theoretical advice. At the same time, it is necessary to ask what should follow practically from these "natural" facts of "intractability" and a "mankind divided," besides the suggestion to curb our exuberance for the spread of democracy. This matter is all the more pressing because of the new circumstances of our time, which call into question the practical conclusions that this conservative analysis has supported in the past. These conclusions generally favored political quiescence and desistance. Following this counsel in our time, however, might serve paradoxically to reinforce the great illusion of mastery and control rather than to check or moderate it.

FOR FOUR OR FIVE CENTURIES, THE context of this cautious advice has been the assumption of the West's safety from and superiority over outside forces. The counsels therefore took the form of warnings against huge enterprises—against colonial ventures, empires, and missions to remake the earth. Less action would save us from such follies. The underlying premise in dealing with the rest of mankind was that we were now and forever secure at home. Edward Gibbon expressed this point when he asked, with "anxious curiosity," whether Europe could ever again be "threatened with a repetition of those calamities which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome." On surveying the conditions of the world and the state of development in the West, including the progress of its science and arms, he concluded that a similar threat in modern times was all but impossible. And should the nearly impossible nevertheless occur, and Europe find herself again threatened, Gibbon offered a final consolation (though one that the anti-Americans will no doubt find repulsive): "Should the victorious Barbarians carry slavery and desolation as far as the Atlantic Ocean, ten thousand vessels would transport beyond their pursuit the remains of civilized society; and Europe would revive and flourish in the American world, which is already filled with her colonies and institutions."

Until the last decade, few would have quarreled with the soundness of Gibbon's judgment. If "barbarism" were to succeed in destroying the West, it would not be a barbarism from the outside, but one of the West's own making. Today, technological development has proceeded to a new stage in which the balance between attack and defense has changed. Outsiders, even without mastering advanced technology, have

access to its destructive instruments; they can wreak havoc on the West. At the same time, the willingness to engage in such attacks has grown with the re-opening of the centuries-long struggle between Islam and Christianity (or enlightened civilization). Manent restates, and seems to agree with, Aron's argument that men will always do what technology allows them to do, at least when they think it advantageous to their interest or cause. It is this facet of the "intractability" of nature that those in the West, if the West can still be said to exist, must now anxiously contemplate.

Whatever the direction of Pierre Manent's own thinking on this point, his book forces the reader to confront the most fundamental political questions of our age—an age that is characterized by the growing threat to the existence of the political. *A World Beyond Politics?* is a remarkable *tour d'horizon* that happens also to be a genuine *tour de force*.

James W. Ceaser is professor of politics at the University of Virginia, and the author most recently of *Nature and History in American Political Development: A Debate* (Harvard University Press).

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PARTHIAN SHOT

by Mark Helprin



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WHAT IF, AFTER YOU HAD PAID THE TAXES ON EARNINGS WITH which you built a house, sales taxes on the materials, real estate taxes during its life, and inheritance taxes at your death, the state would eventually commandeer it entirely? This does not happen in our society...to houses. Or to businesses. Were you to have ushered through the many gates of taxation a flour mill, travel agency, or newspaper, it would not suffer total confiscation.

Similarly with many classes of assets abstract or concrete, from land to Treasury bills to stocks, paintings, and much else; once the state has dipped its enormous beak into the stream of your wealth and possessions they are allowed to flow from one generation to the next. Though they may be divided and diminished by inflation, imperfect investment, a proliferation of descendants, and the government taking its share, they are not simply expropriated.

That is, unless you own a copyright. Were I tomorrow to write the great American novel (again?), 70 years from my death the rights to it, though taxed at inheritance, would be stripped from my children and grandchildren. To the objection that this provision strikes malefactors of great wealth, one might ask, first, where Sylvia Plath's inheritors berth their 200-foot yachts. And second, why, when such a stiff penalty is not applied to the owners of Rockefeller Center or Wal-Mart, it is brought to bear against legions of harmless drudges who other than a handful of literary plutocrats (manufacturers, really) are destined by the nature of things to be no more financially secure than a seal in the Central Park Zoo.

The answer is that the Constitution states unambiguously that Congress shall have the power "To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries." The italics are mine, the capitalization likely James Madison's.

It is, then, for the public good. But it might also be for the public good were Congress to allow the enslavement of foreign captives and their descendants (this was tried), the seizure of Bill Gates's bankbook, or the ruthless suppression of Alec Baldwin. You can always make a case for the public interest if you are willing to exclude from common equity those whose rights you seek to abridge. But we don't operate that way, mostly.

Furthermore, one should not envy the perpetrators of sensationalist trash, but rather admire them, in the hope that someday, somehow, without prostituting, debasing, and degrading oneself while recklessly destroying what is left of the literary culture, one might enjoy a fraction of their wealth. They represent, however, only a fraction of writers, and their good fortune is a poor excuse for seizing either their property or that of their leaner colleagues.

Barnes and Noble is able to publish price-reduced non-copyrighted works not so much because it saves the 10-15% of revenue that would go to the gruel-eating authors but because it saves the 50% that would go to the publishers. Booksellers that publish their own titles benefit not from escaping the author's copyright, but the previous publisher's exercise of a grant of rights (limited, authors take note, to a period of 35 years). "Freeing" a literary work into the public domain is less a public benefit than a transfer of wealth from the families of American writers to the executives and stockholders of vari-

ous businesses, who will continue to profit from, for example, *The Garden Party*, while the descendants of Katherine Mansfield will not.

Absent the government's decree, copyright holders would have no exclusivity of right at all. Does not then the government's giveth support its taketh? By that logic, should the classes of property not subject to total confiscation therefore be denied the protection of regulatory agencies, courts, police, and the law itself lest they be subject to expropriation as payment for the considerable and necessary protections they too enjoy? Should automobile manufacturers be nationalized after 70 years because they depend on publicly financed roads? Should Goldman Sachs be impounded because of the existence of the SEC?

WHY WOULD THE FRAMERS, WHOSE POLITICAL GENIUS HAS NOT been exceeded, have countenanced such an unfair exception? Jefferson objected that ideas are, "like fire, expansive over all space, without lessening their density at any point, and, like the air in which we breathe, move, and have our physical being, incapable of confinement or exclusive appropriation." But ideas are immaterial to the question of copyright. Mozart and Neil Diamond may have begun with the same idea, but that a work of art is more than an idea is confirmed by the difference between the "*Soave sia il vento*" and "Kentucky Woman." We have different words for art and idea because they are two different things. The flow and proportion of the elements of a work of art, its subtle engineering, even its surface glosses, combine substance and style indistinguishably in a creation for which the right of property is natural and becoming.

And in Jefferson's era 95% of the population drew its living from the land. Writers and inventors were largely those who obtained their sustenance from their patrimony or their mills; their writings or improvements to craft were secondary. No one except perhaps Hamilton or Franklin might have imagined that services and intellectual property would become primary fields of endeavor and the chief engines of the economy. Now these are, and it is no more rational to deny them equal status than it would have been to confiscate farms, ropewalks, and other forms of property in the 18th century.

Still, it is the express order of the Constitution, long imprinted without catastrophe upon the fabric of our history. But given the grace of the Constitution it is not surprising to find the remedy within it, in the very words that prohibit the holding of patents or copyrights in perpetuity: "*for limited Times*."

The genius of the framers in stating this provision is that it allows for infinite adjustment. Congress is free to extend at will the term of copyright. It last did so in 1998, and should do so again, as far as it can throw. Would it not be just and fair for those who try to extract a living from the uncertain arts of writing and composing to be freed from a form of confiscation not visited upon anyone else? The answer is obvious, and transcends even justice. No good case exists for the inequality of real and intellectual property, because no good case can exist for treating with special disfavor the work of the spirit and the mind.

A version of this essay appeared in the New York Times.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

from Chicago



THE LAW OF GOD

THE PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY OF AN IDEA

RÉMI BRAGUE

TRANSLATED BY LYDIA G. COCHRANE

THE LAW OF GOD

The Philosophical History of an Idea

Rémi Brague

Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane

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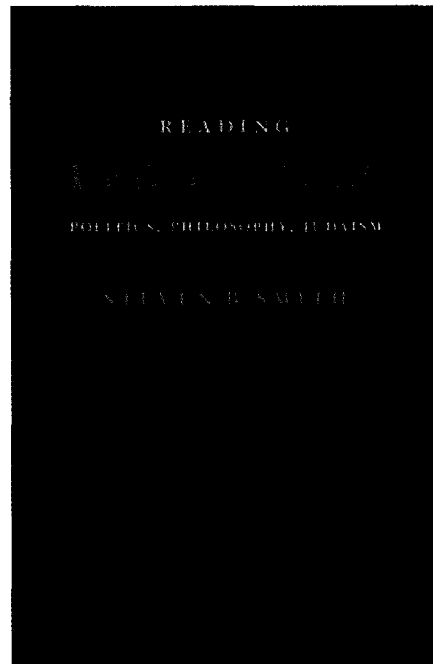
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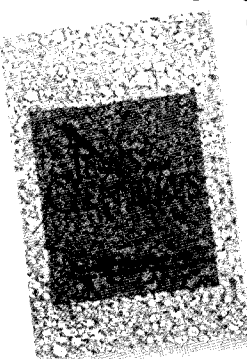
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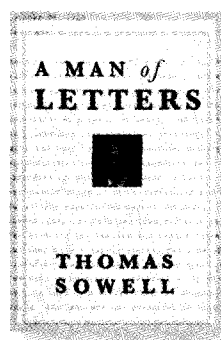
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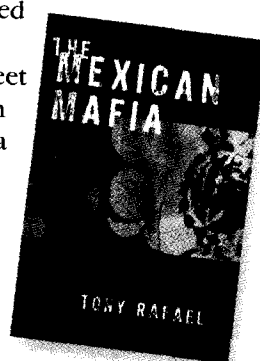
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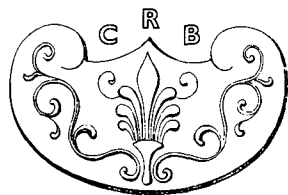
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NEITHER THE GULF War of 1991 nor the campaign in Afghanistan after 9/11 had prepared Americans for the protracted conflict in Iraq. Nor had the administration, of course, which itself was caught by surprise. But in war surprises happen. What the public found less forgivable was the widening gap between the administration's overall view of the war and the realities of the war zone. "Shock and awe" did neither, at least for very long. Though our troops liberated millions, the Iraqis seemed strangely ungrateful, even resentful. Saddam swung from the gallows, but the onlookers cheered not for a free Iraq but for a Shiite leader. The weapons of mass destruction proved elusive, but not as elusive as Iraqi democracy, the establishment of which had become central to the administration's war aims.

Charles R. Kesler
"Iraq and the
Neoconservatives"



IN THIS ISSUE

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT is so large, and its administrators so busy trying to execute often conflicting or ambiguous congressional instructions, that Congress can, like Little Jack Horner, stick in its thumb and pull out a plumb almost at random. The modern oversight investigation, which has less to do with substance than with conducting a dog-and-pony show for the benefit of a scandal-hungry media, has become a staple of the contemporary administrative state. And it almost always redounds to Congress's political benefit, for the simple reason that the exercise carries little if any downside risk. But political theater of this sort, however profitable it may be to particular representatives, is a far cry from the deliberative function that the framers hoped would be the defining characteristic of the legislative process.

Michael M. Uhlmann
"Taming Big Government"

HUMAN BEINGS, being a clannish and quarrelsome lot, tend to find all sorts of things to fight over, and nearly every aspect of human affairs can serve as a powerful spur to actions both heroic and deplorable. So religion produces both Torquemada and Dorothy Day; philosophy spurs Socrates to die for truth and Heidegger to prostitute himself for Hitler; science cures polio and speeds our missiles on their way; the bonds of family provide the foundation for innumerable happy childhoods, but also for the Wars of the Roses.

Ross Douhat
"Lord Have Mercy"

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